

**A PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLORATION OF DEMOCRATIC
PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE IN SELECTED SOUTH
AFRICAN BLACK SCHOOLS IN THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE**

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ABSTRACT

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa in 1994, the South African Education System embarked on an all important democratisation process. In schools, this included attempts to dismantle the concentration of powers to include all stakeholders in the governance of schools. Through this, government wanted to ensure that education in its entirety is geared towards development. This includes the birth of the South African Schools Act, which states that a school governance structure should involve all stakeholder groups in active and responsible roles, and encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision - making. This, in spite of the Act, did not prevent schools, particularly black schools, from excluding learners from exercising their democratic rights in terms of the Act. This led to the perennial question underpinning this study: what idea of democratic participation could prevent the exclusion of learner voices in school governance?

The study proceeds from using the broad theory of democratic participation to include a liberal democratic approach. It argues for an inclusive democratic participation to enable/promote a stable school environment. The basic concept is that each school governance individual is to be treated equally, and with due regard to his/her actual personal preferences. Three distinct and inseparable methods of inquiry, namely conceptual analysis, deconstructive analysis and the use of narratives, and three forms of data capturing in the form of questionnaires, focus group analysis and journal entries are employed.

Research findings revealed six problem areas that had emerged from the data which shows that the situation in the structure of school governance is far from ideal. I then introduced the deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) perspective as a tentative solution, as it became apparent that quite a number of crucial issues are lacking in the structures of school governance. These uncertainties and attitudes undermine the role of learners in

governance and also segregate their legitimacy in the decision - making processes of a democratic state. Deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) therefore becomes the vehicle through which schools should address the continuous uncertainties and impediments that govern their operations in the school community and the staggering lack of partnership within the school governance structure.

I argue and suggest that deliberative processes could be effective if they can be fused with an African culture. The debate has to move from a 'Western' deliberative democratic participation model to one that both deals with and addresses the bigger picture of 'African' democratic participation which is driven by the belief that a person possessing *ubuntu* will have characteristics such as being caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, virtuous and blessed, thus marking a shift from confrontation to conciliation.

Finally, the study identifies the need for moral ethics and democratic/social justice to help address the complex societal issues which influence learner outcomes and insists that schools become accountable for creating an authentic supportive school environment for all communities and its role players. Moral ethics, in its fight against violence and crime, will provide a guide for educators, learners and parents. Its aims of ethical living and democratic justice will provide the basis for a framework of balance and harmony within these groups or society.

OPSOMMING

Sedert die begin van demokrasie in 1994, het die Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysstelsel met 'n allerbelangrike demokratiseringsproses begin. Binne skole het dit beteken om die konsentrasie van mag te verbreek sodat alle rolspelers in die bestuur van skole insae kan lewer. Hierdeur wou die regering verseker dat onderwys in sy geheel ontwikkel. Dit het die Wet op Suid-Afrikaanse Skole tot gevolg gehad, wat stipuleer dat 'n skool se bestuurstruktuur alle rolspelers in aktiewe en verantwoordelike rolle moet insluit en dat dit verdraagsaamheid, rasionele gesprekvoering en gesamentlike besluitneming moet bevorder. Ten spyte van die wet het dit nie skole, spesifiek swart skole, verhoed om leerders uit te sluit van hulle demokratiese reg in terme van die wet nie. Dit het weer gelei tot die vraag wat hierdie studie onderlê: Watter idee van demokratiese deelname kan leerders verhoed om hulle stemme te laat hoor in die bestuur van die skool?

Die studie beweeg vanuit die breë teorie van demokratiese deelname om 'n liberaal demokratiese benadering in te sluit. Dit stel inklusiewe demokratiese deelname voor wat 'n stabiele skoolomgewing moontlik maak of bevorder. Die basiese konsep is dat elke skolebestuur-individu as gelyke en met die nodige respek vir sy of haar persoonlike voorkeure behandel moet word. Drie kenmerkende en onafskeidbare metodes van navorsing, naamlik konseptuele analise, dekonstruktiewe analise en die gebruik van gevallestudies, en drie vorme van datavaslegging in die vorm van vraelyste, fokusgroep-analise en joernaalinskrywings word gebruik.

Navorsingsbevindinge het ses probleemareas geïdentifiseer wat na vore gekom het uit die data; dit het daarop gedui dat die situasie in die struktuur van skolebestuur ver van die werklikheid verwyderd is. Ek het toe die perspektief 'beraadslagende demokratiese skolebestuur' (BDSB) voorgestel as 'n moontlike oplossing, omdat dit duidelik geblyk het dat 'n beduidende aantal kritieke punte afwesig is in die struktuur van skoolbestuur. Hierdie

onsekerhede en houdings ondermyn die rol van die leerders in die bestuur en segregeer hulle wettigheid in die besluitnemingsproses van 'n demokratiese land. Beraadslagende demokratiese skoolbestuur word dan 'n middel waardeur skole die gaping tussen die aanhoudende onsekerhede en struikelblokke wat die werking in die skoolgemeenskap en sy verstommende vennootskap met die skoolbestuurstruktuur, kan oorbrug.

Ek redeneer en stel voor dat daadwerklike prosesse effektief kan wees indien hulle met die Afrikakultuur versoen word. Die debat moet van 'n 'Westerse' beraadslagende demokratiese deelname beweeg en die groter geheel van 'Afrika-' demokratiese deelname hanteer wat gesteun word deur die geloof dat 'n persoon wat *ubuntu* besit oor sekere karaktereienskappe beskik, soos besorgdheid, nederigheid, bedagsaamheid, vrygewigheid, gasvryheid, om ander mense in ag neem, ander te verstaan, wys te wees, sosiaal volwasse en sensitief te wees en deugsam en geseënd te wees. Daardeur verskuif die klem dan van konfrontasie na rekonsiliasie.

Laastens wil die studie die behoefte aan morele etiek en demokraties/sosiale regverdigheid ondersoek, aandag gee aan die komplekse sosiale vraagstukke wat leeruitkomste beïnvloed, en daarop aandring dat skole verantwoordelik gehou word vir die handhawing van 'n outentieke ondersteunende skoolomgewing vir alle gemeenskappe en die betrokke rolspelers. Morele etiek, in sy geveg teen geweld en misdaad, sal 'n gids vir opvoeders, leerders en ouers verskaf na 'n etiese lewenswyse en demokratiese reg sal mik na 'n basiese patroon van balans en harmonie binne hierdie groepe of die gemeenskap.

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Preface

Nowadays, there are no laws that exclude women from any career pursuit or life opportunity in education or elsewhere. Women are now making their mark in virtually every economic sector including the traditionally male strongholds of engineering, heavy transport, construction and manufacturing. Probably the most spectacular progress by women has been in the public sector. Many women now have voting rights, follow careers which demand that they work outside of the home, enjoy professional status equal to their male compatriots, occupy top leadership positions in their societies and, furthermore, fulfill their traditional roles of wife and mother. I am one of those black women who have climbed the ladder especially in the academic field and research.

My interest and ideas in philosophy, particularly in gender and school governance, were entrenched as a result of exposure to conferences and academic capacity as well as through commitment. Throughout I have honed my research skills, developed course materials, read papers, led seminar programmes and published articles to make my voice as a black female heard. My undergraduate academic training at the University of Transkei, now renamed Walter Sisulu University, provided the foundation.

My achievement showed remarkable improvement as I progressed through to attaining B.Ed from the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg), and culminating in a Master of Education degree in Leadership and Management at Rhodes University. The said potential benefited from exposure to such distinguished academics as Dr Steve Appel and Messrs John Gulting, Volker Wedekend and Ford who had exposed me not only to analytical skills and free speculative thought but also to philosophical and gender ideologies.

When one undertakes a philosophical journey to trace a connection between logic and analogy, one realises that at every step of the way, one's

philosophical thinking was greatly influenced and shaped by their teachings on, inter alia, equality, democracy, curriculum and tensions between participation and democracy which have given birth to this study I have undertaken. At the very beginning Dr Appel required us to interpret and articulate on “why liberal theorists disagree with Bantu Education?”

Although this topic was tabled in 1993 it provided me with the esoteric knowledge and wisdom, the training in intellectual analysis and subtle argument which I found relevant and proper to inform chapter two of this very study. The initial motivation towards the development of a just and equitable society was and still is relevant today. Hence the many social problems that exist today were relevant in yesteryears. The module was about “Theorising Education”. This presupposes that the current notions of democratic participation and governance located as they are in the broad socio-cultural context have important implications for the way one might view the South African school governance.

Nevertheless, the essay given to us by Gail Nicholson in September 1993 on developmental problems of childhood and adolescence has sharpened my awareness of the way school children are treated. The essay topic read as follows: “Although children spend many hours of the day at school, the influence of the school environment is often overlooked when discussing factors which affect emotional and behavioural problems which may occur, discuss”. In my study on school governance now, my intention is to alleviate such factors which affect emotional and behavioural problems that may occur when learners are excluded from decision - making in their schools. As a black woman among white students, who had no voice during those years, I do not believe that they paid any attention to me. However, their good work has shaped, nurtured and developed my way of thinking and the perspective with which I see things today.

My views on management and gender thinking was further developed by Rhodes University when I registered in the years 2001 and 2002 for a

Masters' programme in leadership and management. I was the only female among 18 males registered for the course. My experience as a black female was not different to that which I experienced while at the University of Natal. I and a coloured gentleman from Port Elizabeth were the only two to graduate in the class of 2003. Being an only woman in the midst of patriarchal men made me think about my future.

Dr Clive Smith rooted my leadership and management skills, especially through the "Organisation Development Module". After I graduated they kept in touch with me. Dr Smith visited me at the university where I lecture in educational leadership and management and we shared some teaching for two days. My previously developed gender thinking was fixed by Prof Hennie Van der Mescht at Rhodes. The outcome was my Master's thesis on "Feelings and perceptions of female leaders in institutions of higher learning" under the superb supervision of Prof Van der Mescht. Even today, I notice that inequalities still remain deeply lodged within institutions of higher learning.

Since I am still deeply interested in and concerned about inequality issues, this study uses liberal theories to look at existence of inequalities in the school governance structure, particularly in black schools. In the past, there was white on black inequality, however, now, it is black on black and this reflects a reversal. This is why after theorising about the lack of voice of learners in school governance I then suggests a new model of deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) with elements of *ubuntu* to be fused in school governing bodies and to be used in schools.

In the process of conducting this study, I received different signals about what is expected of me. The fact that I grew up in the rural areas where certain cultural norms and values are the order of the day sometimes nearly constrained me. My own background is equally powerfully steeped in patriarchy. In the African context, particularly in the Pondoland area, the effects of gender discrimination are, I believe, just as complex as in other

societies because gender ideology is too deeply entrenched. In our culture a man is still unquestioningly regarded as the head of the family. These implied meanings of male generated imagery, language, thinking and power structures permeated my consciousness as I continued with my research. If I had not been determined to continue studying and writing, my voice would have been silenced and I would have fallen to the same trap women often create for themselves as they entrench patriarchy, thereby becoming in many ways collaborators.

I was very fortunate when I met my PhD promoter in Madrid (Spain) in 2004. With his superb guidance I am proud to present this study. The staff members at Stellenbosch University never made me aware of the colour of my skin let alone of my being a woman. This study therefore is the combination of years of experiences as a student and the role I played in management and governance of schools as a head of department in a junior secondary school, as a deputy and acting principal of a high school and my years of experience as an educator and lecturer. Being black and being female never stopped me in achieving my goals.

The voices from the past, my mother and father who were both educators, have also paved the way for a certain kind of thinking. My mother used to raise our consciousnesses through story telling and narratives (story telling) have served as a research paradigm for this study. Consciousness-raising, to us females, is a technique that builds our store of knowledge by providing access to the common experiences and patterns revealed by hearing stories of others, more especially those who are oppressed. The effects of narratives are to integrate a sense of identity by resolving internal and discriminatory conflicts. The experience of sharing problems and feelings helped me during the writing of this study. My final comment is that, I see school governance as a structure that is now perpetuating past discriminatory practices and this worries me. After thirteen years of democracy, these milestones are not enough. People, especially those who used to be privileged in the past,

refuse to change. What is more disturbing is that, whatever has been achieved has had more to do with personalities than with a coherent strategy.

CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This study is philosophical in nature. Through a careful critical examination of the South African Schools Act (SASA) and the Learner Representative Council Guides (RCL) I have tried to evaluate the goals of “providing voice for learner expression” and “providing learners with an opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding their schools”. From this investigation, I have attempted to work out a general, systematic, coherent and consistent picture of “minimal participation of learners” in the school governance structure. According to Popkin and Stroll (1993: X111), Socrates, at his trial in 399 BC maintained that the reason he philosophised was that “the unexamined life was not worth living”. He (Socrates) believes that unless people asked questions, and seriously sought the answers, they would never be able to know if they were doing the right thing. Otherwise, their entire lives might be wasted pursuing useless or even dangerous goals. This is why I decided to examine these RCL goals.

I saw it as necessary to scrutinise these two documents to see if they are rationally defensible. The reason for participating in this exercise is that we as educators are too willing to accept without question written policies, documents, and various views based upon other people’s personal experiences. I as an educator and a philosopher insist upon subjecting the aforementioned goals to intensive critical examination in order to discover if the views and beliefs written in these documents are based upon adequate evidence, and if schools may be justified in adhering to them. Most schools have never bothered to examine these two documents to discover their foundations; whether they have adequate or acceptable reasons for making us believe that they have any general consistency or coherence. Therefore, I have to do some philosophising to see if

they are strong enough when tested. My intention, as already alluded to is not to interrogate the whole notion of the South African School Governance (SGB) but to look at some of the aspirations of giving a voice to the voiceless; hence the study positions itself in a critical approach.

I am inspired by the critical approach because it does not take things for granted or accept things at face value. It questions, it carries with it a number of assumptions about what needs to be done in regard to the problem at hand. The philosopher, following Socrates' contention, should insist upon bringing to light what implicit beliefs are, what assumptions we make and what coherent opinions we hold. For example, statutory learners are included but that does not mean that they are participating. The fact that there is participation does not necessarily mean learners are participating, let alone engaging with other stakeholders. Both these conditions remain lacking to a large extent in the present school governance structure and my overriding concern is with the already least advantaged group (learners), given the loss of their voice in school governance which in my opinion leads to the risk of a real democratic divide.

1.1.1 Background to the study

The South African education system has come a long way since the promulgation of the South African Schools Act¹ in 1996. The Act provided for a uniformed system of governance of schools. Subsection 11(1) asserts that "a representative council of learners must be established at every public school enrolling learners in the eighth grade and higher" (Ministry of Education B 58: 1996: 18). According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education Manual for School Management (C-1 of 2001), this is a perfect example of the new understanding of governance, which is at the centre of the new education

¹ The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) provides for the establishment of school governing bodies with considerable powers at all public schools. These governing bodies must be composed of the school principal, and elected representatives of parents, teachers, and non-teaching staff. In secondary schools, governing bodies may also have co-opted members without voting rights. Governing bodies are juridical persons in South Africa.

system. Furthermore, subsection 23 (1) of the Act lists the categories of persons who must be represented on the governing body of a public school as follows: (a) parents who are not employed at the school, (b) educators at the school, (c) members of staff who are not educators; and (d) learners in the eighth grade or higher at the school (Ministry of Education B 58:1996: 18).

Additionally, subsection 23 (1b and C) of the Act further maintains that the principal must be a member of the governing body of a public school and that the governing body may co-opt a member or members of the community to assist in the performance of its functions. It posits that parents must comprise the majority of members of a governing body who have voting rights. Elected for three years, SGB members must meet at least once every three months and minute the meetings that are, in principle, available to every parent. Representing a link between the school and the community, they must enable parents to express themselves and take part fully in educational matters.

According to section C of the Eastern Cape school governance manual the SGB is a community-level partnership and must take responsibility for ensuring that the children of that community get the kind of education that will make them the citizens of which the new South Africa can be proud. This has been done to fulfil the aims of education in the new paradigm, that of developing responsible future citizens. This means that the SGBs not only ensure the democratic link between parents and schools, but it is their duty to develop the school. The South African Schools Act (SASA) therefore, stipulates the functions which the SGB must perform on behalf of the school. Among the functions of individual members of the SGB is to contribute to and execute the functions assigned to the SGB. The exact number of members of the SGB according to the manual may vary from one school to another and the parent component must be the majority. The manual further stipulates that if the school does not have a non-teaching

member of staff the number of parent governors must be reduced by one so that the total number of governors will be reduced by two.

1.1.2 The table below provides a guideline of the number of members to be elected for each component of the SGB (see appendix B (1.2)).

School	Principal	Educators	Parents	Non-educator Staff	Learners	Total
Secondary School Of 630	1	2	7	1	2	13
Secondary School Of 630 or More Learners	1	3	9	1	3	17
Comprehensive or Combined School of 500 Learners	1	2	7	1	2	13
Comprehensive or Combined School of 500 or More Learners	1	3	9	1	3	17

In addition to the above arrangement, in 1999 the RCL Guides were issued by the National Education Department as part of its policy of promoting democratic governance in South African schools. They provided fundamental information on a Representative Council of Learners as stakeholders in the governance of schools and as a body that is constituted in accordance with the South African Schools Act. According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education Manual (2001: C5), at the secondary level the Representative Council of Learners (RCL)²

² According to the South African Schools Act, an RCL is an official body constituted in accordance with the SA Schools Act representing all learners in secondary schools. The RCL should become the most prestigious official representative structure of learners in the entire school.

is seen as a full partner in the governance of the school and as the only body that represents every learner and in which every learner can participate. Through this system, learners' voices are supposed to be carried all the way to the top and have a say in the formulation and implementation of the educational policy. This is where I immediately sensed the contradiction and decided to embark on the study.

According to the Guides, every three years the Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) announces in a Provincial Circular the date from which elections should begin and on which they should be concluded. Procedures at meetings are to be determined by each SGB. However, at the end of each year the learners of the school should democratically elect an RCL for the following year, "a representative council of learners referred to in section 10 (1) must elect the learner or learners referred to in subsection 1 (d)" (Ministry of Education B 58:1996: 18). This means that an RCL is made up of learners elected by their fellow learners to represent them in the school governance structure.

Ultimately, the teacher liaison officer (TLO) is expected to convene the first RCL meeting. He/she (TLO) is expected to be a reliable and sympathetic educator who can build a trusting relationship with the RCL and school management in order to promote communication between him or herself, the principal, staff and the RCL. His/her main function should be to guide and organise the RCL and develop a sense of leadership in the members of the RCL. Nowhere is it stated in the RCL Guide where the TLO should help in the election of RCL representatives.

Some of the roles of an RCL as stipulated in the Guides and those that attracted my attention are as follows: (a) to create the opportunity to identify and train future leaders (b) to keep learners abreast of events at school and in the community (c) to represent learners in SGBs (d) to provide a voice for learner expression (e) to enable learners to contribute towards the improvement of the

culture of learning, teaching and service in their school (f) in appropriate situations, to provide learners with an opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding the school (Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001: L-1) (see appendix A section 2.4). This means that learner participation is conditional and minimal and this contradicts the very purpose of the Guides and the South African Schools Act. Learners in principle are supposed to be full members of SGBs. And according to this clause, they are expected not to participate fully in decision-making, but to participate in “appropriate” matters. To me, this does not indicate as being given full status, but conditional status. Moreover, it does not clarify who must decide on behalf of learners, whether parents because they are in the majority or educators. That is where the contradiction lies.

After I repeatedly studied the contents of the South African Schools Act and the Guides, I became convinced that they both lack a conception of participatory democracy, are superficial and trivial and do not spell out how this participation could take place or be achieved for good governance in schools. Besides, the most worrying factor is that participation in decision-making is restricted to “appropriate situations” which are not even spelt out and the guides are even silent on how representation is to be conducted. It is only the preamble to the South African Schools Act that comes close to the pronouncement of democratic cooperation, but it is silent on democratic participation. The preamble declares that:

It is necessary to provide the basis for an education system of high quality which will advance the democratic transformation of society and promote good governance of schools in co-operation with the state (Ministry of Education 1996: 2).

Subsequently, I became convinced that something needed to be done even if it was by way of revising the guides or sensitising the schools so that learners as

key stakeholders should have a say in the governance of their schools. However, I opted to pursue the latter. It was against this background that a pilot study was conducted which I shall now explore in detail.

1.1.3 Pilot study

A preliminary study was conducted that served to ground this research. According to Mouton (2001: 103), the most common error in doing research is not to conduct a pilot study. In reality, a pilot study can be regarded as a small scale trial run of all the aspects planned for use in the main enquiry. Parents and educators were targeted as participants in the pilot study. My focus was not on learners because at that moment I only intended to capture the views and perceptions of parents and educators. In principle, there was nothing to stop me from selecting respondents on the basis of knowledge and convenience. I decided to select educators and parents deliberately because I believed that they had some special contribution to make, that they had some unique insight because of the position they held in school governance.

A small scale survey was conducted and questionnaires were personally distributed to all secondary schools in the Mthatha district of the Eastern Cape Province where I reside. Prior to conducting the pilot, permission to conduct the study was obtained from the district manager and from principals of schools. A letter requesting permission to conduct research in schools in the Mthatha district was personally handed to the district manager. That gave me an opportunity to explain the reasons for conducting the study and the research procedure to be followed. A similar procedure was followed to obtain consent from principals of schools to conduct research in their schools.

The conceptual framework (derived from my analysis of the South African Schools Act and the Learner Guides on learner participation) within which this

study was conducted actually informed the choice of questions that were posed in the questionnaires. Arising from the fact that this study was exploratory in nature, the questionnaires were largely open-ended so as to allow the respondents to raise issues that could be followed up in the main study. Where closed questions were used, especially in measuring the attitude of respondents, the point Likert rating scale was employed (Robson 1993: 256). This assisted me in obtaining a degree of validity on which I will later elaborate (chapter three).

The main focus of the pilot questions centred on the question as to whether “learners as decision-makers do make a difference” or “add value in school governance meetings”. I wanted parents and educators to share their experiences. Examples of subsequent questions included the manner in which learners are participating, their readiness to participate, their competence, and the value of participation and learner rights. I must admit, very little came from the side of parents and I then decided to concentrate on educators’ perceptions when analysing the data. Questions were answered affirmatively and insights were shared on some of the conditions that must prevail to maximise the ability of learners in decision-making. The idea of putting learners in power at that point seemed to be a farfetched ideal.

Common themes that kept on emerging from the data are as follows (a) Learners are not competent enough to deal with sensitive issues of school governance as they are still immature and need to be trained in matters relating to governance²; (b) Learners do not participate meaningfully in democratic processes within the school, as they do not have what it takes to participate meaningfully, lack sufficient understanding and tend to vent their personal

² Governance refers to the act of governing. It means ‘guiding’ or ‘ruling’ an organisation.

problems; (c) The participation³ of learners in the school governing body does not add any value to management; they just sit quietly and do not make any contribution as they lack knowledge of issues related to governance; and (d) Learners do not recognise their rights⁴, they are confused, they misuse those rights that they understand and, as a result, educators feel that these rights are not given to the appropriate people (Mabovula 2004). Based on the results of this preliminary study, which pointed out that there is minimal democratic participation in schools, this study was conducted.

This brings me to a discussion of the present school governance structure. It is the present school governance structure that provides the foundation for inclusive participation of all stakeholders including learners and parents in the governance of schools.

1.2 The present school governance structure

One of the main reasons for adopting school governance structures in South African schools was set out in the government white paper which preceded the South African Schools Act (SASA). This stated that: "A school governance structure should involve all stakeholder groups in active and responsible roles, encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision making" (Department of Education 1996a: 16). This is a participatory conception of democracy, one that conceives of stakeholders as permanently engaged in dialogue, presupposes both literacy on the part of individuals and a system that

³ Participation describes both an act and a form of intervention (Oakley 1981). It can also be viewed as a desired end point related to the degree of involvement in decision-making and a concept of considerable importance in the current governance debate. The term is much more concerned with fostering relationships, with ways of thinking, and with structures and processes all of which can combine to create an integrated approach to the way participation is practised.

⁴ Both Rawls (1972) and Dworkin (1977) regard respect for rights as a cornerstone of democracy, and this understanding is contained in the South African constitution. Rights are claims for special treatment, which require particular duties from respondents to be affected.

encourages the formation of personal opinions and provides the channels for participation.

The above statement presupposes that (a) stakeholders are all present, or at least that they have a right to be present when decisions are taken, (b) usually there is an open debate on the problem at hand until the facts and the alternatives have become clear, (c) all of those in the structure express their will – either by arguing until a consensus is found, or by taking a vote, and (d) the function of the school governance chairperson is to facilitate discussion, to supervise decision-making and to declare the decision taken as formally binding on behalf of all stakeholders.

This, I admit, is an ideal form of democratic participation which can only be applied in situations where everybody can be present, is mature enough to argue and deliberate, and where the group is small enough to give all who so desire a chance to express their opinions. However, at present this ideal kind of democratic participation is not taking place in schools and more especially in school governance: the data in this study supports this assertion. At the present moment, I can say there is a crisis of democratic participation in the school governance structure and, moreover, there is a crisis of lack of democratic engagement.

The implications of this entire decline are clear: that stakeholders such as educators don't much like participation as they think that participation is something which is done by and for others. Furthermore, this shows that participation is already a minority activity, and more worryingly still, this shows that participation is on the verge of becoming a minority interest. Because of this reality, it is apparent that learner democratic participation is not sufficient.

This problem is articulated more clearly in the Daily Dispatch of March 12, 2008. The title of this insert is "school governing body members need proper training". He asserts that:

The involvement of community members in the running of schools is somewhat of a socialist policy of which many revolutionary stalwarts in South Africa may approve. But the real issue that affects governance is the level of participation of community members in deliberations where the school governing decisions are taken and positions adopted (Daily Dispatch 2008: 9).

His argument further states that when meetings are held both learners and parents would be as quiet as court attendants. There is generally no constructive contribution from community members in schools, many of whom do not even know the South African Schools Act. Furthermore, he maintains that the community members only contribute when there is a conflict, and then they take sides.

In his argument the idea of proper training emerges. He maintains that even the service providers who are entrusted with the task of training SGB members have no idea at all as to how and with what to educate them. Besides, he posits that all the service providers do is confuse SGB members with big words that have no meaningful impact on the SGB members. He writes:

The government should fortify the training module's terms of reference so that sufficient training modules persons perform SGB training. They should also include career orientation programmes for SGB members so that communities become informed and are able to assist their children.

Mgxaso in this article supports stakeholder empowerment before being involved in school matters. He also supports my pilot study findings and my assertions of lack of participation of SGB members. Training of SGB members is done in the Eastern Cape and South Africa as a whole as soon as new SGBs are elected; however, this is not enough, as there are no checks and balances to monitor their performance in schools. It is this level of participation that is also my concern in this study. However, it seems appropriate at this stage to trace the origins of school governance in South Africa by trying to explore shifts in policy from apartheid education to the present school governance system.

1.3 Introducing the argument: lack of meaningful learner participation in school governing bodies (SGBs)

Democratic school governance and the establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs) as fully explained in the introductory section of this study, have emerged as major conceptual and structural manifestations to deepen, institutionalise, facilitate and consolidate democratic principles in all South African public schools (Waghid 2003: 103). According to Sithole (1998: 107), democratic school governance emphasises that decisions must be based on consultation, collaboration, co-operation, partnership, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties in the school community.

This, however, is not the case in most South African black secondary schools, and especially in the Eastern Cape Province where I reside. The pilot study, mentioned earlier, revealed that even during this democratic era, learners are not afforded equal opportunities to participate with other stakeholders in decision-making in school governance. When considering the role of learners as key stakeholders in governance, meaningful learner involvement implies something more. Yet the irony that emanated from the preliminary findings was that, although the democratisation of school governance had given all

stakeholders a powerful voice in schools' affairs, learners' voices were and still are seemingly being silenced. It was evident that learners are still merely given a semblance of authority while real power remains securely anchored with the principals and teachers.

Similarly, it must also be noted that such a lack of learner participation is also evident in places such as the United Kingdom and the United States. Fletcher (2003: 2) contends that in many US schools, learners' involvement just amounts to 'tokenism', 'decorations', or as merely a 'stamp of approval', where one will only find one student representative, instead of two or three among the school boards⁵ of 15-20 adults, and none of these learners is given a vote in any matters pertaining to them (learners). Instead, many teachers see them as a problem, or as one principal said, "groaning lumps" (Fletcher 2002: 2).

Furthermore, Chinsamy (1995: 2) has also pointed out the difficulties of direct learner participation in the government and management of schools, and gives examples from countries such as England, Canada, Australia, France, New Zealand and the United States which, for quite some time, experimented with learner participation in governance. From these examples, Chinsamy asserts that even with these countries, such an idea remained an unresolved question. This means that there are still serious unresolved issues. According to Gordon (1986: 244), Leicestershire comprehensive school in England, after experimenting with student involvement practices, decided in 1985 to dissolve its democratic practices of involving students in school governance. After the suspension of formal democracy in the same year the participation of students has not been a significant issue.

⁵ *Governing bodies* have different names such as "school boards", "parent committees", "councils", "board of directors" and so on. The main point is that regardless of their sort or size, purpose or persuasion; all governing bodies have similar functions (Main & Suransky 1997: 6). They make rules for the common good and ensure that these are obeyed; they decide how to allocate scarce resources; and they adjudicate when conflicts arise (*ibid.*).

Probing a little more deeply, Rick (2002: 1) gives examples of issues addressed by the student council at the Osseo high school in Minnesota. He asserts that where learners are involved, student councils have limited agendas that seldom address the broader responsibilities of their role. However, he does not deny the fact that such participatory responsibilities are important but argues that they are certainly not the core reason for having learners in governance.

The idea of the inclusion of parents and learners in school governance although on a limited scale, was practised by white schools prior to the advent of democracy here in South Africa. Parents Teacher Associations (PTAs) in the primary schools and Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) in the high schools although not legally recognised, were allowed in white schools only. According to Sithole (1995), they were distributed unequally in the country and were non-existent in rural areas. Schools were run in an authoritative manner by principals who, officially, were the ones who could make decisions. In support of this view, Nzimande and Thusi (1998) assert that full powers were in the hands of the principal or those of administrative or traditional authorities. This means that democratic participation was not practised in schools and the idea of human rights was not taken into consideration.

Democratic participation is now a human rights issue here in South Africa. Initiatives underpinned by the South African Constitution formed the basis for the democratic regime and provided a Bill of Rights that guaranteed basic fundamental rights for all citizens, old and young including learners in schools. South Africa as a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, adopted human rights as one of the central themes of its new constitution, and the ministry of education urged the school system to follow suit. Here in South Africa, when the Bill of Rights was passed in 1996, it was supported by the South African Schools Act (SASA) during the same year in accordance with its

constitutional requirement. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution Act No. 108 of 1996, affirms that:

All learners and partners at a school have the democratic right to due process and to participate in decision-making about matters affecting them at the school. They also have the right to have their views heard about these matters (Joubert & Prinsloo 2001: 247).

As a follow up to the Bill of Rights, South African researchers such as Carrim (2006) in the study on "Human Rights and the construction of identities" indicates that human rights education is more than just being taught about human rights content. He asserts that a human rights education is about skills, values and attitudes, as much as it is about content. He points out that people need to feel safe and secure when receiving human rights education and they ought to be treated with respect, integrity, dignity and justice (Carrim 2006: 447). Besides, he maintains that the development of critical thinking skills needs to be constantly highlighted, freedom of expression and thought need to be encouraged and access to information ensured. What Carrim has mentioned has also been looked at in greater detail in this study when participation is discussed.

Participation in education has been argued by researchers such as Dieltiens (2000) who believes that if more people could be included in school governing bodies, democracy would be boosted and equality in schools would be ensured. In her abstract on education for democracy (2000) she maintains that educational decisions should reflect public deliberation. Furthermore, she posits that education should prepare students to engage in democratic processes, to be able to recognise their own interests and those of the broader community. In short, an education that builds the autonomy of students. This is my concern too, that of preparing learners to deliberate constructively in the structure of

school governance. It is a fact that where people do not participate, they do not care for the organisations to which they belong.

In addition to Carrim and Dieltiens, various studies have been conducted specifically on the functioning of school governing bodies in this country by researchers such as (Karlsson 2002; Heystek 2004; Mncube 2005; and Sithole 1996). All the aforementioned researchers have contributed a great deal on the subject of school governance. Sithole for example, in his case study of "Amandlethu Public School" looked at the shortcomings of the Amandlethu school governance structure and at theory implications for the decentralisation of school governance as a whole, although his focus was on resuscitating the culture of learning and teaching. He argues that as a result of the part played by students during the liberation of South Africa, they (students) deserve to take part in all discussions regarding their education. His findings suggest that spaces should be created for learners to participate sufficiently in SGBs in order to allow them to exercise their right to participate.

Mncube (2005), on the other hand, implies that schools which willingly opened up spaces for students to deliberate and dialogue were more democratic than their authoritarian counterparts. He argues that learners need to be given a full chance to participate in crucial decisions affecting the life of their school. This is my starting point too in this study; however, I then go further and suggest a new model of school governance that could include all role players in schools. Besides Mncube, researchers such as Karlsson (2002) look at the structure of school governance very sceptically.

In her study on democratic governing bodies, Karlsson argues that the governance reforms failed to include measures that prevent a re-enactment of traditional South African power relations of race, class and gender at schools. She further maintains that the apartheid-era inequalities continue to manifest

themselves in various forms in schools. This echoes my concerns. The inequalities of the past, where learners have no say in the governance of schools re-emanate in the school governance. The voice of the learners is being deliberately silenced by other stakeholders during their participation in school governance.

Other South African researchers such as Mathebula (2001), Nkwinti (2001), Sithole (1998) and Chinsamy (1995) support these views. These writers highlight a variety of non-participatory contributory factors such as teachers' dominance in SGB meetings, manipulation of learners by teachers, learners being used as a form of decoration for SGB approval by government, and learners being used as a form of tokenism just to appease them. All these factors inhibit the development of the democratic participation of learners in school governance and, I contend, have the potential to undermine the noble ideals of SGBs.

The idea of children's participation from tokenism to citizenship is explained by Roger Hart with a ladder of young people's participation. His ladder moves from level 1 to level 8 (rung 1-8). The lowest level in the ladder is (a) level 1: young people are manipulated, (b) level 2: young people are decorated, (c) level 3: young people are tokenised, (d) level 4: young people are assigned and informed (e) level 5: young people are consulted, (f) level 6: adult initiation, shared decisions with young people, (g) level 7: young people lead & initiate action and the final level 8: young people & adults share decision making.

Applying Roger Hart's ladder to school governance means that the education department directly placed learners in the final level, that of sharing decision making with adults. However, according to the pilot study, learners are still between level 1 and 3. For them to move up to the last level of the ladder, the school and the school governance stakeholders will need to adopt the deliberative democratic school governance model (DDSG) (suggested in chapter 4 of this study) in order to embrace all the levels of the ladder. This will take

time, but it will be worth adopting the suggestions given in order to achieve the suggestions put forward for citizenship.

My concern is that present decisions do not favour participation of all affected parties, as they are not taken on a consensual basis. Decisions in newly established structures such as the SGBs are taken by majority rule, which seems to curtail discussion and deliberation in SGBs. This constitutes a crisis because the SGBs, instead of working towards the inclusion of all stakeholders, apparently exclude learner voices. According to Fraser in Makubu (1993), the alienation of learners from such an important decision-making body leads to learner frustration and this could have a negative impact on education. This view is supported by Fletcher (2003) who also argues that:

By denying these learners' representatives the primary tool of decision-making on school boards, these adults serve to "negate" the voice of students and encourage their use as merely a "stamp of approval" (Fletcher 2003: 2).

As a way of responding to the above national and international findings, I now move on to highlight the present school governance structure in South Africa in order to portray what is expected of SGB structures. It must be noted that the situation in South Africa is different from other countries because of its apartheid policies of the past, which placed the South African school governance system in a deep crisis, especially with regard to previously disadvantaged schools.

1.4 Setting the stage: the origin of school governance in South African schools – exploring policy shifts

The question of learner participation in school governance has been a problematic issue for many decades. When considering student involvement in the past, educators often cite the classroom and extracurricular activities as providing enough opportunities for participation. In South Africa, for example, between 1948 and 1990 (the “apartheid” years), the black schooling system engaged in long and taxing struggles of learner resistance (Hartshorne 1992, Kulati 1992, Makhubu 1993, Reeves 1994, Chinsamy 1995, Kallaway 1984, and Morrow 1989). The basis of the struggle was the demand for the development of a democratic education system where learners would have the right to have their views heard about matters affecting them more which, traditionally, was the domain of principals, teachers, and more recently parents.

According to the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) (1993: 25), the articulation of the demand for increased community participation in the governance of schools emerged in the context of resistance and struggle. The struggle for a democratic education system was tied intrinsically to the political struggle for a new democratic order, for example, the Soweto uprising of June 1976, which symbolised a turning point in student involvement both in terms of the educational and political activism of students. Furthermore, the developments of the mid-1980s and beyond saw the South African schooling system of management and governance being pushed further into a new crisis.

The rise to prominence of the People’s Education Movement was one of the manifestations of this crisis as the struggle against apartheid education took a new course, as explained by Mashamba (1992: 10). Attempts were made to turn schools into sites of struggle for the transformation of the education system (Hartshorne 1992, Kulati 1992, Mashamba 1992, and Kallaway 1984), as people demanded greater consultation and involvement in the control of their schools

(NEPI 1993: 4). The results were the formation of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), and then the Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) which were intended to provide the vehicle through which divisions between young and old, teachers and parents could be overcome (Sisulu 1986: 18-19).

Despite the lack of legal recognition by the apartheid education authorities, the PTSAs became established in many schools in South Africa (Makhubu 1993: 6). However, from the apartheid regime's standpoint the fundamental reason given for the non-acceptance of PTSAs was the fact that most of these bodies gave equal status to students in decision-making (NECC 1989). This view was linked closely with the demand for the recognition of democratic and autonomous Student Representative Councils (SRCs) through which learners could claim a right to determine how their education was conducted (Perry in Chinsamy, 1995: 9).

Here in South Africa, for example, the year 1994 brought about fundamental changes to all levels of South African life with the coming to power of the African National Congress (ANC) led government. One of the significant areas in which the new government made notable changes was in school governance, which was revolutionised by an array of policies and legislation such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994), the Task Team Report (1996) and the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA). It was the Task Team Report⁶ which laid the foundation for the governance of schools.

⁶ The Task Team Report (1996: 27) recommended that management should not be seen as the task of the few, but as an activity in which all members of an educational organisation should engage. The report also states that governance is a process to which all contribute and in which everyone in an organisation should be involved. These new policies and legislation redefined the meaning of school governance. The philosophy behind it is to encourage schools to become self-managed and self-reliant.

The initiatives underpinned by the Constitution formed the basis for the democratic regime and provided a Bill of Rights that guaranteed basic fundamental rights for all citizens, old and young alike, including learners in schools. South Africa as a signatory of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights adopted human rights as one of the central themes of the new Constitution and the then Ministry of Education urged the school system to follow suit. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (Article 26, paragraph 2, in English & Stapleton 1997: 117).

It is obvious that these human rights objectives can only be fulfilled in a democratic school that exists in the context of a democratic society. If learners are to be taught respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the early years of their school days, for example, they will hopefully enjoy these rights and freedoms in the later years of their lives. At the same time, if teachers are to teach children and young people respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, they must enjoy this freedom themselves.

It is common cause, however, that numerous violations of not only learners'/teachers' rights, but also of other fundamental human rights, occur in our South African schools. For example, reports are received about learners who are subjected to various forms of harassment in schools by teachers. Learners are threatened because they speak up and demand to be heard as legitimate members of the school governing body (SGB). Some teachers harass them because they hear sensitive school issues such as the misuse of school finance

by the principal, sexual misconduct on the part of teachers and many other forms of misconduct not meant to be made public (Chinsamy, 1995: 2). The above points bring me to a discussion of my theoretical framework and motivation in pursuing this study.

1.5 The rationale for conducting this research

My main objective for conducting this study is a desire to create educational and political reality at the school level with special emphasis on SGBs, by studying the attributes and behaviour of the key stakeholders, that is, student-teacher relationships. This study is an attempt in that direction with specific focus on the role of learners in the governance of secondary schools. The potential, limitations, constraints, consequences and challenges facing learners in the SGB structure needs to be revealed and debated. This study attempts to contribute to that debate. Perry provides further motivation for such a study when he comments:

If we are to make democracy work, our schools must remake themselves, this consciously shared effort at decision, and executing is an essential part of the remaking. The practice in the intelligent pursuit of group purposes is our key to the future (Perry 1967: 81).

This comment by Perry brings me to a discussion of my theoretical framework and motivation in pursuing this study.

1.6 Methodology for theoretical framework: The rationale for a critical approach

My first major concern was to explore an approach that would allow me to go beyond the surface illusions of what is taking place in the governance of some selected black schools in the Eastern Cape Province, in order to help uncover

what is happening in these SGBs and thus help stakeholders in school governance to change and cultivate better governance procedures. Decision-making at the school governance level currently does not appear to favour participation of all affected parties because decisions are not taken on a consensual basis.

The second reason for adopting such a critical approach was to challenge the status quo in these schools. If nothing is done, the effects will be visible in later years. For example, learners will remain marginalised and teachers will continue denying others access to governance. In addition, governance will remain the privileged domain of teachers, a situation which in turn will not contribute to the transformation of the education system and the empowerment of learners as required by the new democratic South African education system.

A philosophical inquiry uses a critical approach. As this study is philosophical in nature, I am inspired by critical theory because it shows concern for the marginalised and excluded people and also strives to promote democratic relations among people. Learners, for example, are part of SGBs. Using a critical approach I did not just accept that all is well because the constitution says so. I needed to closely monitor the SGB process by looking at its structure with an open and critical eye, and question the procedure. Because there are some anomalies, and because there are those who are dominated or oppressed in the structure, I tried to address the situation and help promote democratic relations within schools and SGBs. Furthermore, critical theory looks at the mechanics of the process of privilege and marginalisation, and often thinks about the possibility of political action against the process. In support, Wilfred Carr (1966: 139) maintains that an essential feature of a critical social science is that it:

is clearly rooted in concrete social experience, for it is explicitly conceived with the principal intentions of overcoming felt dissatisfaction.

Consequently, it names the people for whom it is directed; it analyses their suffering; it offers enlightenment to them about what their real needs and wants are; it demonstrates in what way their ideas about themselves are false and at the same time extracts from these false ideas implicit truths about them; it points to those inherently contradictory social conditions which both engendered specific needs and made it impossible for them to be satisfied; it reveals the mechanisms in terms of which this process of repression operates and, in the light of changing social conditions which it describes, it offers a mode of activity by which they can intervene in and change the social processes which are thwarting to them. A critical social theory arises out of the problems of everyday life and is constructed with an eye towards solving them (Carr 1966: 139).

My understanding of critical theory, following Carr, is that it is constituted by a desire to overcome less favourable situations, whereby one establishes conditions for the empowerment and liberation of others, in this instance giving voice to the aspirations of learners. This brings me to a further elucidation of critical theory⁷.

⁷ Historically, critical theory as a concept is difficult to pinpoint, and its origins or its boundaries are difficult to define with certainty. Mwanje (2001a: 2) asserts that the term 'critical theory' was first used by the Frankfurt School i.e. members of the Institute for Social Research of the University of Frankfurt, their intellectual and social network, and those influenced by them intellectually, to describe their own work. Since then, it has become a broad term, encompassing work done across the disciplines grouped as the humanities. According to Mwanje, among the fields grouped within the designation are Marxist theory such as the Frankfurt School, psychoanalytic theory such as the work of Jacques Lacan, semiotic and linguistic theory such as presented by Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes, queer theory, gender studies, cultural studies, and critical race theory. Conversely, other researchers believe that the argument locating the critical approach goes further than the Frankfurt School and it is worth mentioning here. For example, some theorists argue that the term, as currently used, corresponds with Jacques Derrida's presentation of "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" in 1966 at Johns Hopkins University. Others claim that this is an oversimplification for the purpose of having a clear beginning point to something that doesn't have one, and point out that Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan had been writing for decades when Derrida presented his paper, and are clearly now considered part of critical theory. Still others point out that the roots of all of these works lies in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx, and Ferdinand de Saussure. Others go back even further.

Mwanje (2001a: 2) traces the critical approach to Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). He also makes mention of other scholars who worked on the approach such as Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), Erich Fromm (1900-1980) and Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979). Within the social sciences, he maintains that this approach is associated with critical theory of the Frankfurt School of the 1930s, conflict theory, radical psychotherapy, and feminist analysis. The works of Paulo Freire for example, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1972), and that of Jürgen Habermas in *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971), according to Mwanje, all belong to this approach.

The Frankfurt School, on the other hand, is further described by Mwanje (2001a: 2), as a school of neo-Marxist social theory, social research, and philosophy since that was, after all, where the term was first used. It is also believed that the Frankfurt philosophers' emphasis on the 'critical' component of theory was derived significantly from their attempt to overcome the limits of positivism, crude materialism, and phenomenology by returning to Kant's critical philosophy and its successors in German idealism, principally Hegel's philosophy, with its emphasis on negation and contradiction as inherent properties of reality. These philosophers also drew on other schools of thought to fill in Marx's perceived omissions and also took up the task of choosing the parts of Marx's thought that might serve to clarify social conditions which Marx himself had never seen.

1.6.1 Jürgen Habermas

The theoretical framework for this study (and for this section in particular) was informed by the work of Jürgen Habermas (1996), Freire (1989), Iris Marion Young (1990, 1996) and lastly, Seyla Benhabib (1992). A discussion of the ideas

of these theorists paves the way for my argument in favour of increased democratic participation, which might positively influence life in SGBs. I hold that my argument for learner democratic participation might best be tackled by adopting arguments from these thinkers.

Jürgen Habermas (1996), a German thinker and philosopher, put forward his ideas of 'Communicative Action' and 'Consensus through Deliberation and Reasoning', which were adopted to form a basis for argument as a theoretical framework for this study. In his theory of communicative action, for example, Habermas introduces the concept of 'crises'. According to Habermas, crisis comes when modern society fails to meet individual needs and when institutions in society manipulate individuals. He explains that people interact to respond to this crisis and he calls this interaction "communicative action".

Using the Habermasian notion of communicative action, I hold that consensus will occur in school governance once all the stakeholders reason and communicate on an equal basis. This is because Habermas, in his *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, defines the concept of communicative action as follows:-

Communicative action can be understood as a circular process in which the actor is two things in one: an *initiator*, who masters situations through actions for which he is accountable, and a product of the transitions surrounding him, of groups whose cohesion is based on solidarity to which he belongs, and of processes of socialisation in which he is reared (Habermas 1981: 135).

Communicative action in this sense is the one type of action that Habermas says uses all human ways of thinking, and language. This combination will allow school governance stakeholders to understand and agree with one another and

to make plans for common action. The act of coming together and agreeing (communicative action) takes the place of revolution as a mode of change. To explain this further Habermas recognises that:

A discourse-theoretic interpretation insists on the fact that democratic will-formation draws its legitimating force both from the communicative pre-suppositions that allow the better arguments to come into play in various forms of deliberations and from the procedures that secure fair bargaining processes (Habermas 1996: 24).

According to Habermas, majority rule is based on revisable and compromising decisions, taken not only to ensure that minority opinion is respected, including the modification of majority views to meet the objectives of minorities, but also to safeguard open and honest deliberation on an issue prior to taking a decision by majority vote. The discussion has to shift from the question of the prevalence of simple majority decision-making in deliberative processes to one which constitutes better and reasonable argumentation (Habermas 1996: 24). Habermas's theory assumes consensus. According to him, participation invariably needs to result in consensus. Habermas's condition states that only those norms can claim to be valid that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all concerned in their capacity as participants in the process. His consensual form of democratic participation through reasoning and persuasion could help explain how participation could best be achieved in our schools and, more particularly, in school governance.

On the other hand Habermas (1996: 299) argues that consensus ought to be subjected to argumentative communication or deliberation and reflection. In other words, he believes that consensus should not be a prerequisite for discussion, but should rather reflect the democratic discourse of informed deliberation and reflection responsive to the demands of an active citizenry

(Habermas 1996: 299). If there is an exchange of argument or points of view, according to Habermas, they should be unconstrained. For him it follows from this that no individual or group of people could legitimately exclude others from deliberating on any matter that interests them, as is the case now with learners. He maintains that the rights of people to participate in deliberation are legally institutionalised without any individual being excluded (Habermas 1996: 147). According to Habermas each individual should have "an equal opportunity to be heard" in the deliberative process.

Relating the Habermasian notion of discursive democracy for school governance (SGBs), for example, his account could be of significant value since teachers and learners have to engage in deliberation and reflection to convince each other of what they have to say in their structure of governance and more especially during meetings for the sake of a better argument. I am confident this could be achieved because his discursive conception assumes that all persons are autonomous and could rationally articulate persuasive arguments through public deliberations in a participatory and democratic way.

Such ideas could be of significance more especially if they could be put into practice in the SGBs' day-to-day operations. I also hold that inclusion and consensus in schools could be achieved by adopting Habermas's notion of consensus through deliberation and reasoning. Members of school governance, for example, could benefit from him in the sense that their argument could rest on how to promote democratic participation and decision-making without impeding on socio-cultural differences which seem to be clouding progress in the SGB structure at the moment.

The idea of communicative action is the one type of action that Habermas says uses all human ways of thinking, and language. Such a combination could allow all SGB stakeholders to understand and agree with one another and to make

plans for the common good of the issue at stake. This is what is really needed in the school governance structure where stakeholders need to think and act rationally so as to produce better arguments. Through this, SGB stakeholders will be free to exchange ideas, including not just voicing opinions, but listening, because through the act of engaging and listening participants can be persuaded and their thinking could be transformed.

I now move on to Paulo Freire and his theory of conscientisation.

1.6.2 Paulo Freire

In addition to Habermas's views for decisions to be taken with the consent of all stakeholders in school governance, both learners and teachers need to adopt what Paulo Freire called *Conscientizacao* (conscientisation), a Portuguese word meaning "consciousness-raising". *Conscientizacao* implies that:

In discovering myself oppressed, I know that I will be liberated only if I try to transform the oppressing situations in which I find myself. And I cannot transform that situation just in my head – that would be idealism, a way of thinking, which believes that conscience (consciousness), could transform reality just by thinking. In this instance the structures would go on the same and my freedom would not begin to grow (Reuke & Welzel 1984: 27).

According to Reuke and Welzel (1984), Freire's concept of *conscientizacao* means developing in learners a critical understanding of society and an awareness of their capacity to change society. For Freire, the unique attribute of human and self-conscious existence enables people to change their situation. According to Freire, until the people involved realise their capacity to make the world, they are de-humanised. Once they have

become conscious of this capacity, the possibility of humanisation is opened up. This means that until learners become conscious of the fact that they are oppressed and try to change their situation, the school governance will not be transformed. Also, until teachers understand that they are not adhering to the South African schools' constitution, nothing will happen to change the status quo.

Reuke and Welzel (1984: 27) further explain Freire's concept of conscientisation, which is identified with cultural action for freedom, as the process by which, in the subject-object relationship, the subject finds the ability to grasp, in critical terms, the dialectic unity between self and object. In this case, Freire refers to the false consciousness of the oppressor, and emphasises the need to lead the oppressor to see how 'reification' dehumanises the oppressor as well as the oppressed.

Freire's main concern lies with social transformation of both the oppressor and the oppressed by educating both of them through critical self-reflection 'consciousness'. This is why Freire reaffirms that there is no conscientisation outside the theory-praxis: praxis is the combination of reflection. During that process action and unity might help achieve consensus in school governance. Freire argues that domination, aggression and violence are intrinsic to human social life. He further argues that very few human encounters are exempt from oppression of one kind or another because of many factors, and therefore people tend to become victims and or perpetrators of oppression. He also recognises that oppression can be grounded in religious beliefs, politics, affiliation and attitudes based on size, age, and physical and intellectual disabilities (Reuke & Welzel 1984: 27).

Relating what Freire believes in to what is taking place in school governance, once all stakeholders in the school governing body reflect on their behaviour, the

process of inclusive action can then be taken and unity can be achieved in our school governing bodies. If members of school governance could adopt what Freire believes in, SGBs could function in a way whereby opportunities are established for reflection and collaboration.

Teachers, for example, complain that the participation of learners in school governance does not add any value, as they sit quietly and do not make any contribution and tend to give vent to their personal problems (Mabovula 2004: 1). Culturally, I understand where learners' silence comes from: in most South African black communities, especially where I come from, a learner is perceived as a child, and a child is not allowed to speak out in front of adults or in a large group discussion. This can be traced as far back as pre-colonialism and to the culture of Africans. For most African communities, culture is a social practice, and although democracy promotes individual assertion and initiative, it may be worrying for a learner who comes from a culture where the question of who speaks from a position of leadership or power is highly dependent upon age, gender, or status.

Such cultural practices are further explained by Paulo Freire: while speaking with Costigan (1980), Freire described the 'culture of silence' as not a culture of silence because those who participate do not speak. For him they speak without words, by gestures and by reactions. Freire further explains it as a culture that is being penetrated, invaded, dominated, sometimes surreptitiously, sometimes violently, by another culture, a dominating culture.

Relating what Freire and Costigan postulated to school governance, the fact that learners give full vent to their personal problems can be argued to be a form of resistance to dominance. They resist teachers' dominance and they are frustrated. By being silent, their silence is misconstrued by teachers as ignorance and this is a worrying factor.

Having explained Freire's standpoint and how it is related to this study, I now move on to Iris Marion Young and her idea of inclusive participation.

1.6.3 Iris Marion Young

Iris Marion Young (2000: 3) describes inclusion as the cornerstone of democracies and emphasises that the prevention of exclusion is paramount. In order to achieve inclusion, Young suggests that before there can be democracy, there must be a consensus as to the supremacy of the transformative ideal (Young 2000: 3). Inclusion and democracy, according to Young, broaden the understanding of democratic communication by reflecting on the positive political functions of the narrative, rhetorically situated appeals, and public protest. It reconstructs concepts of civil society and the public sphere as enacting such plural forms of communication among debating citizens in large-scale societies.

Young (2000: 3) recognises that democracy is a contested topic which is "hard to love". She writes this near the beginning of *Inclusion and Democracy*. She maintains that the love/hate relationship many people have with democracy originates, in part, from love of democracy in theory but displeasure surrounding the outcomes of democratic systems in practice. According to her, democracy requires that citizens should be willing to set aside their existing moral commitments, so that they will be open to having their own opinions and understandings of their interests changed in the process.

Young then explores the idea of listening to one another. She suggests that listening to the other is more respectful of one's unique individual position as it is the only way to respect the uniqueness and "irreplaceability" of each person (Young 1999: 1-2). In addition, she puts forward a concept of rhetoric in her idea of listening to one another. Rhetoric, according to Young, allows speakers to

listen carefully to what others have to say, thus building respect for the viewpoints of others. This for Young enables participants to recognise what they have to say, which in turn establishes conditions for deliberation and relations of trust.

Moreover, Young sees justice, not as fairness, but as liberation, defined in part as the development of the capacities of all individuals. In this way, she develops the idea of inclusion of all voices. This concern with one's "interchangeability" with others does not, however, inspire in Young the kind of individualism in which individuals are seen as exclusively responsible for their fates (Young 1999: 1). Young's concern with the development of individuality itself, and with the flourishing of individuals, leads her to examine those social and economic constraints that prevent such development from taking place. She believes that people such as policymakers, for example, should not imagine what people might think, but ask them, and listen to their answers and this is what I intend to do in this study when conducting interviews.

Relating Young's ideas of reaching consensus and inclusion in our school governance by means of listening to one another, all stakeholders irrespective of age and gender will respect one another and by so doing enhance participation. Her idea of listening to stories as narrated by individuals could be an excellent way of reaching consensus in the SGB structure. Data in this study has revealed that members do not listen to one another, and if Young's ideas could be adopted perhaps democratic participation could be achieved. SGB stakeholders would be able to allow speakers to listen carefully to what others have to say, thus building respect for the viewpoints of others. This would enable participants to recognise what they have to say, which in turn establishes conditions for deliberation and relations of trust in the structure of school governance. Her ideas are supported by Seyla Benhabib, who suggests that this could also be achieved through reason and involvement of human consciousness.

1.6.4 Seyla Benhabib

Finally, critical theorist Seyla Benhabib (1996), with her philosophical theory of reason and the moral self, has extended Habermas's discourse theory, Young's voices of the others and Freire's *conscientizacao*. Benhabib extends discourse theory in several ways, and in doing so she validates it in contexts where difference is at issue, by moving human consciousness forward to include the developing cognitive consciousness of a human being. She thus extends the options for marginalised individuals to challenge their "situatedness" by insisting on their discursive power in the name of future identities and communities. Benhabib asserts that:

A moral point of view is the contingent achievement of an interactive form of rationality, i.e. a moral conversation, exercising the art of "enlarged thinking" and reversibility of perspectives, seeking to understand the standpoints of concrete others (Benhabib 1996: 70-71).

According to Benhabib, conventional moralities should stop the conversation by identifying insiders and outsiders, and therefore decisions can be reconsidered in a reflexive way in order to provide for more justifiable and convincing arguments. Benhabib argues that not all forms of deliberative engagement should necessarily result in permanent consensus, as Habermas suggests. For her, deliberative engagement can also result in a temporary consensus whereby deliberative agents reflexively reconsider a less persuasive argument in order to achieve a more reasoned and justifiable conclusion and that entails a revolution in consciousness.

Benhabib requires that we judge from the perspective of *others*⁸. Her model

⁸ "Other", according to Benhabib (1992), is a term she borrowed from George Herbert Meade. This is the dominant conception of the self-other relation in contemporary moral theory. It

requires that we recognise all beings capable of speech and action to be participants in the moral conversation i.e. the principle of universal respect. This means that if people argue about a particular issue and a set of normative assertions, they must eventually come to a reasonable agreement and that reasonable agreement must be arrived at under conditions which correspond to our idea of a fair debate. These rules represent the moral ideal that we ought to respect each other as beings whose standpoints are worthy of equal consideration.

Furthermore, according to her we ought to treat each other as concrete human beings with a capacity to express our standpoints. Therefore we ought to embrace, whenever possible, social practices embodying the discursive ideal (Benhabib 1992). This for Benhabib means that everyone must be allowed to speak and if other voices are neglected in groups, this form of government will not be sustainable. According to Benhabib:

The fairness of moral norms and the integrity of moral values can only be established through a process of practical argumentation, which allows its participants full equality in initiating and continuing the debate and suggesting new subject matters for conversation. (Benhabib 1992: 73).

Her discursive (reflexive) form of argument has led me to the idea of the Africanisation of the democratic participation debate I suggested as the outcome of this study; that is the fusion of the present and past forms of decision-making and reflexivity, which would result into the formation of an Africanised/indigenous form of democratic participation.

requires us to view every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe to ourselves.

In traditional communities, no decisions could be taken by means of voting as this could result in one group being put in a disadvantaged position. This is the practice which used to take place in the past (pre- and post-colonial) where no conclusion was forced on people who disagreed. Democracy meant all men/women were heard, and a decision was taken together as a people. If no agreement was reached, another meeting would be held (Mandela 1994: 24-25). Majority rule was a foreign notion and the minority was not to be crushed by the majority.

Relating what has been said to this study, SGB meetings could continue for several days until some kind of consensus or temporal consensus is reached. Such an idea is supported by Benhabib with her idea of temporal consensus. This means that everyone will be allowed to speak, and if other voices are recognised the school governance structures will be fruitful and sustainable and no one will be excluded by means of voting.

The aforementioned ideas provide the basis for the research question for this study.

1.7 Research question

Based on my theoretical framework, the question this study sought to pursue was: "What ideas of democratic participation could prevent the exclusion of learner voices in SGBs?" And as a follow up to the main research question the following objectives will be targeted:

- To investigate learner participation in governance of schools in five schools in the Mthatha district of the Eastern Cape;
- To identify hindrances to learner participation; and
- To come up with guidelines for deliberative democratic school governance.

1.8 Research goals

The first goal of this study was to explore possibilities within liberal democratic theory which could bring about improved school governance – that is, SGBs that are more inclusive. Liberal democratic theorists such as Young (2000) argue that inclusion and democracy can potentially broaden the understanding of democratic communication by reflecting on the positive political functions of narrative, rhetorically situated appeals, and public protest. Democratic communication reconstructs concepts of civil society and the public sphere by enacting such plural forms of communication among debating citizens in large-scale societies. I wanted to use Iris Young's ideas of communicative democracy in order to establish the possibility of school governance becoming more inclusive.

The second goal was to help create space for learners to argue deliberatively in schools, whether in classrooms or in SGBs. At present, processes of debate and decision-making in school governance often marginalise learners because the norms of discussion are biased towards some forms of expression favourable to educators. It is this recognition of voices and differences which is central to my undertaking of this study, as it would hopefully help give a voice to the voiceless (learners). In doing so, I explored spaces in which I could begin to recognise what is indigenous or African in relation to what it means to deliberate.

The goal of my study would become clearer by the methods of inquiry which were employed in this research. All the methods used are of philosophical enquiry as this study is philosophical⁹ in its nature. A detailed explanation of methods of inquiry to be used in this dissertation follows.

⁹ Philosophical analysis raises deep questions such as, what is it that is being analysed i.e. what sorts of things are the objects of analysis? What sort of thing is the analysis itself, for example is it a proposition? Under what conditions is an analysis correct? How can a correct analysis be

1.9. Methods of philosophical inquiry

1.9.1. Conceptual Analysis

In order to establish the reasons behind the lack of meaningful learner participation in school governance, three distinct and inseparable methods of inquiry – conceptual analysis, deconstructive analysis and the use of narratives – were used. Firstly, concepts such as participation, democracy and governance were analysed to demonstrate the concepts' multiple uses and meanings, for the primary purpose of clarifying learner participation. This explanation compelled me to give a contextual definition of what analysis was before justifying my reasons for choosing a conceptual analysis. Analysis is (a) a way of understanding complicated things (b) by understanding their simpler parts and (c) the way in which they are related to one another.

Having given this explanation of what analysis is I was then obliged to analyse the word "concept" before attempting to explain conceptual analysis. What is a concept? Hirst and White (1998: 29-30), in their endeavour to clarify what a concept is, assert that a concept is not the same as an image because one can have a concept of 'punishment' without necessarily having a picture in their mind of a criminal being hung or a boy being beaten. They further explain that if they have the concept, it might be said, they can relate 'punishment' to other words like 'guilt' and say things such as 'Only the guilty can be punished'. Thus the ability to relate words to each other goes along with the ability to recognise cases to which the word is applied.

informative? And/or how, if at all, does the production of philosophical analysis differ from what scientists do? It is common cause, however, for philosophers to offer philosophical accounts or analysis, as they are sometimes looking for knowledge, autonomy, representation, (moral) goodness, reference, and even modesty. For philosophers, concepts are the objects of their analysis, and philosophical analysis differs from the results of scientific investigation in being conceptual analysis.

The second explanation they elaborated on is equating concept with the possession of ability. According to them, whether it be the specific ability to use words appropriately, or the more general one to classify and make discriminations, both types of ability seem to presuppose something more fundamental, namely the grasp of a principle which enables us to do things. This point is further clarified by theorist John Locke, who holds that an idea is the object of the understanding when a person thinks and this is probably as near as we can get to saying what a concept is. He further maintains that our understanding of what it is to have a concept covers both the experience of grasping a principle and the ability to discriminate and use words correctly, which is observable in the case of others as well as to us. The point now is how to relate what has been said to conceptual analysis.

Traditionally, content analysis has most often been thought of in terms of conceptual analysis. In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for examination, and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence. Also known as thematic analysis, conceptual analysis has been given varied definitions. The question is, what is conceptual analysis?

Conceptual analysis is defined by Burbules and Warnick (2004: 4), as analysing a term or concept, showing its multiple uses and meanings, for the primary purpose of clarification. This may include arguing for internal or external distinctions that differentiate significantly different meanings and may include a recommendation or prescription of the term's "proper" usage. In other instances the analysis, according to Burbules and Warnick, may be more neutral and descriptive (diagnostic). They further hold that one needs to ask the question "What is an X?" or "What counts as an X?" and this would typically stimulate reflection on the apparently necessary characteristics that constitute an X, versus the merely incidental features (for example, what are the features that make science "scientific"?).

Burbules and Warnick (2004:4) assert that the apparent misunderstandings or disagreements over a word or concept are often attributable to people using the "same" terms or concepts in tacitly different ways. To be clearer about these varied meanings, it becomes possible to focus better on what is actually in dispute. They then give an example that while two parties may be arguing over a "school choice" proposal, meanwhile the real issue at stake is the different understandings of what constitutes a "choice". One may believe that a choice exists wherever there is lack of active impediment, and the other may believe that many apparent choices are not "real" choices unless more than one impediment is remedied.

In this case, people could argue about underlying assumptions, but only if they recognise that they are hidden within their different uses of the same term. In other instances, according to Burbules and Warnick, an unexamined concept may mask an underlying confusion or equivocation, for example, someone may proclaim that creationism is a "science", but not have examined very carefully what is meant by "science". The apparent controversy, then, may not in fact be over the status of creationist beliefs themselves, but over what constitutes "scientific" knowledge.

Hirst and Peters (1998: 34) also further explain conceptual analysis, as a guide that helps to pinpoint more precisely what is implicit in moral consciousness. It also enables us to stand back a little and reflect on the status of the demand to which the word bears witness. According to Hirst and Peters (*ibid.*), conceptual analysis frees us to ask fundamental questions in ethics, which relate to whether the demand is justified. They further explain that, in the process of trying to make explicit the principles that underlie our use of words, we should be clearer both about how things are and about the sorts of decisions to be made in dealing with them. By doing so, we will be in a better position to look through

words at the level of explanation, justification or practical action that makes reflective interest possible.

Most people have a sense of what the concept 'democracy' means. Volumes of essays and theories have been crafted by philosophers and scholars capturing the meaning of democracy, for example, the work of Jürgen Habermas (1996a, 1996b), Iris Marion Young (1996), Seyla Benhabib (1996) and Martha Nussbaum (1997). However, the concept of democracy is wide and vague and needs to be clarified for the purpose of this thesis. In education, for example, the concept 'democracy' is defined by Glickman (2003: 277) as a word much used by educational leaders yet rarely defined beyond general statements. In addition, Seyla Benhabib (1996) asserts that any definition of essentially contested concepts like democracy, freedom, and justice is never a mere definition in itself as it articulates the normative theory that justifies the term. That is why the concept democracy is to be fully examined in the following chapters.

An analysis of the concept of democracy in this thesis is considered better done by answering the most obvious question "What would the word 'democracy' mean to various school stakeholders?" By so doing I wanted to know explicitly what I was trying to convey when I said learners should participate democratically in school governing bodies. The main point was not just to analyse the concept of democracy, but simply to see how one could go about it and how one can apply suggestions that were made.

Another way of looking at democracy in this study was expressed by contrasting the concept with its conception. Let me explain this further by the use of the word 'democracy' again. As already indicated, the concept of democracy is wide and vague and people tend to use it the way they feel best suits them. This was and still is a cause for concern. It seems that such a concept would cover almost anything, and so it might, if I look at the multifarious ways people actually use

the word “democracy”. For example, teachers and learners in schools may have some preferred versions of the term. Such specific versions of democracy I have labelled *conceptions* of democracy.

Another way in which this contrast between concepts and conceptions arises is from our acquiring beliefs about things. This example may also suggest that it is often not easy to decide how much to allocate to the meaning of a term and how much to attribute to a conception of the thing. I thought it would help to have the distinction available. Many terms such as democracy are very general, and so it might be easy to discuss not really the concept, but various competing conceptions that could be subsumed under it. The question which then follows is: what is the relevance of this method to this particular study?

Conceptual analysis leads itself to the argumentative and it tries to answer the questions which evoke feelings and how it is possible to evoke those feelings. Such questions can only be answered by referring to the context – in this instance, ‘democratic school governance’. Also, I was able to get to know certain concepts by using them, after having analysed a concept’s meaning, to discover its correct usage. In this way, I discovered which characteristics belonged to the concept, and which did not.

The next method of inquiry, different from conceptual analysis will be a deconstructive critique.

1.9.2 Deconstructive critique: post critical inquiry

According to Balkin (1995), deconstruction refers to a series of techniques for reading texts developed by Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and many others. These techniques in turn are connected to a set of philosophical claims about language and meaning. However, because of the popularity of these techniques and theories, the verb “deconstruct” is now often used more broadly as a

synonym for criticising or demonstrating the incoherence of a position, and this will not be the case with my study.

According to Balkin (1995), critical scholars, especially legal scholars, were originally attracted to deconstruction for three reasons. Firstly, deconstruction claimed that meanings were inherently unstable. Secondly, deconstruction discovered instability and indeterminacy everywhere and it seemed to support the notion that social structures were contingent and social meanings malleable and fluid. Thirdly, deconstruction seemed to show that all texts undermined their own logic and had multiple meanings that conflicted with each other, and lastly, deconstruction could be used for “trashing”, that is, showing that particular arguments were fundamentally incoherent.

In support of the above reasons, Derrida argues that the deconstructor looks for the ways in which one term in the opposition has been “privileged” over the other in a particular text, argument, historical tradition or social practice. According to him, one term may be privileged because it is considered the general, normal, central case, while the other is considered special, exceptional, peripheral or derivative. Something may also be privileged because it is considered truer, more valuable, more important, or more universal than its opposite. Moreover, because things could have more than one opposite, many different types of privileging can occur simultaneously.

According to Balkin (1995: 2), one can for example, deconstruct a privileging in several different ways and then explore how the reasons for privileging A over B may also apply to B, or how the reasons for B’s subordinate status applies to A in unexpected ways. One may also consider how A depends upon B, or is actually a special case of B. The goal of these exercises is to achieve a new understanding of the relationship between A and B, which, to be sure, is always subject to further deconstruction.

I have drawn on policy documents on school governance, such as the Reconstruction and Development Document (1994), The Task Team Report (1996) and the South African Schools Act (1996), together with findings in the form of a text derived from the study I conducted in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The latter formed the basis for my argument for a lack of democratic participation by learners in schools. I then used deconstructive arguments to make a case for categorical distinctions by showing whether the justifications for the distinction in the documents undermine themselves, or whether categorical boundaries are unclear, or if these boundaries shift radically as they are placed in a practical context, such as in school governance.

Deconstruction was also useful when analysing the findings of the study already mentioned above, because teachers' ideologies and behaviour often operate by privileging certain features of governance while suppressing or de-emphasising legitimate governance by others, that is, by learners. According to Derrida (1967), the insertion of texts into new contexts continually produces new meanings that are partly different from and partly similar to previous understandings. Thus, there is a nested opposition between them. Deconstructive analysis attempted to explore how this similarity or difference is suppressed or overlooked. Balkin (1995) believes that deconstructive analysis often emphasises the importance of context in judgment, and the many changes in meaning that accompany changes in contexts of judgement.

Balkin further explains deconstructive analysis as a technique that looks at what is de-emphasised, overlooked or suppressed in a particular way of thinking or in a particular set of policies/documents. Sometimes techniques explore how suppressed or marginalised principles return in new appearances. They give an example from the field of law: where a document of law is thought to be

organised around a dominant principle, the deconstructor looks for exceptional or marginal counter principles that have an unacknowledged significance, and which, if taken seriously, might displace the dominant principle.

Another reason for using this technique was because of the influences of Balkin (1995), who argues that deconstructive analyses closely study the figural and rhetorical features of texts to see how they interact with or comment upon the arguments made in that text. The deconstructor in this case looked for unexpected relationships between different parts of that text, or loose threads or gaps that at first glance appear peripheral yet often turn out to undermine or confuse the argument. I believe this helped to guide me when analysing the relationship between teachers and learners in school governance.

Balkin (1995) further elaborates by stating that the deconstructor may consider the multiple meanings or key words in a text, or relationships between words, and even exploit different meanings to show how the text speaks with different (and often conflicting) voices. Behind these techniques are a more general probing and questioning of familiar oppositions between philosophy (reason) and rhetoric, or between the literal and the figural. Yet, although we often see a text as merely supplementary and peripheral to the underlying logic of its argument, closer analysis often reveals that metaphor, figures of speech and rhetoric play an important role in political reasoning, and this I believe would be detected in the policy documents and from the use of narratives.

1.9.3 Narrative inquiry

Young (2000) is among the researchers who argue for making a case for narratives. By arguing for narratives, Young aims to integrate persons with different voices, since narrative recognises that all persons have a voice and are different, and that they have a right to participation in public life. She further argues that persons with different voices have a right to participate in public life,

and argues for creating spaces for students to argue deliberatively in governance. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) write:

This struggle for research voice is captured by the analogy of living on a knife edge as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to capture the participants' experience and their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to and reflect upon the audience's voice (Clandinin and Connelly 2000: 12).

A major challenge for me when using this form of inquiry (narratives) was how to locate the voice of my participants and myself in the research. I organised focus group discussions and interview schedules to investigate the personal stories of the SGB stakeholders such as learners and teachers in five purposefully selected secondary schools in the Mthatha area of the Eastern Cape Province. The reason for doing so was that participants need a receptive audience, often a small group, and control over how much they wish to reveal about themselves. Such focus group discussions (FGD) were informal interviews with small groups focusing on specific topics or subjects. It is a qualitative technique involving between six and twelve people talking spontaneously and freely.

The subjects were selected because of their relevance to the topic under study. An approach which allows people's views and feelings to emerge, but which gives the interviewer some control, is known as the focused interview (Mwanje 2001b). Focus group discussions were used as they help to reveal consensus views. They capitalise on group dynamics and generally stimulate richer responses and allow new and valuable thoughts to emerge. The researcher could observe the discussion and gained firsthand insights into the respondents' behaviour, attitudes, language (including body language) and feelings. They are also more effective in terms of cost because they can be completed more quickly

and are generally less expensive. They may also generate richer responses by allowing participants to challenge one another's views.

The crucial thing here is that with narratives, a group interview is an opportunity for the researcher to pose questions to a sequence of individuals, taking turns around a table. Learners were invited to discuss their own experiences, and a similar format was used for teachers as well. The interview concentrated on the experiences of the learners and teachers. A tape recorder and a video camera captured both verbal and non-verbal communications. Later on, they were checked and double-checked by the research assistants, the researcher and participants. These stories helped me understand how individuals used narratives to make sense of participation in school governance, as both personal and traditional stories can be a rich source of relating lived experiences.

Data were also collected through field trips. The field texts comprised of research interviews and journals or other forms of autobiographical writing and the inquiry would privilege the voice of the participant. To stimulate interviews I asked, for instance, "How was participation of learners an issue in their school community and your community at large?" and encouraged participants to offer illustrative stories from their experience. I also encouraged stories drawn from the past, for example, "How was participation handled in your grandparents' day?", "How might their stories make a difference if told and retold now?" and "Did participative consensual decision-making ever involve learners or children? If so, how?" By incorporating stories from South Africa on how democracy and consensual decision-making used to be achieved, school stakeholders would be in a better position to not only establish democratic participation in their respective schools, but also to create opportunities for the marginalised.

According to Connelly and Clandinnin (1987/8), narrative inquiry offers a means to bring previously silenced voices to the attention of educators and policy

makers. Using narrative inquiry, the researcher sought to extend the “listening range” of dominant discourses by representing the narrative of the “other” in a way that helps ensure that its meanings are understood. Specifically, I worked with learners who are members of SGBs from their schools to tell their stories. Stories were elicited in unstructured interviews, informal conversations, and in other representational forms chosen by these learners. Depending on the researcher’s commitments, the field text may be more or less collaboratively constructed, may be more or less interpretive, and may be more or less researcher influenced (Clandinin & Connelly: 2000).

It is my contention that narrative inquiry, when used by a researcher acting from within the critical paradigm, would have a strong researcher-distinctive product. That is, it is likely that the participants’ stories would be “taken up” by the researcher as a means to interrupt “discourses of power”. Their narratives would be brought together to begin the work of creating a “discourse of possibility”. This discourse could then inform policy design efforts and governance practices that would support and empower learners.

According to Donwana (1998: 5), when one inserts oneself into narratives as a way of understanding the story, one is still in the midst of one’s own life story, and both are embedded in one’s own cultural contextual narrative. Donwana explains further that these “small stories” constitute our identity, our history; they illuminate the dynamic and logic of our narrative unfolding, and reveal the sources of our material and ideological domination. Narrative is always a process, connecting the individual to the environment she shapes and is shaped by.

Lastly, narratives were used in the study as a form of generating “data” which were used to determine further the outcome of this research. The aim of using narratives was to understand how respondents think and act in the situated contexts in which they live through their stories. Stories are frameworks through

which people view, understand, and make sense of their experiences. In the process of narratives, individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) helped me to hear the voices, including those of the marginalised.

From among the characteristics of research, this study used a case study research design involving five schools in the Mthatha area of the Eastern Cape Province. Five school principals, student representative councils (RCLs) and educators, and a number of research approaches which are applicable to the qualitative research process such as questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and journal entries, formed part of the data collection process.

The study used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a common feature of qualitative research (Brink 1996). The characteristic features of this kind of sampling is that it is usually more convenient and economical and allows the researcher to handpick the sample, based on knowledge of the area and phenomena of study. This kind of sampling uses the judgment of the researcher to select those subjects whom the researcher considers know the most about the phenomenon and who are able to articulate and explain nuances to the researcher (Field & Morse 1985). Robson (1999: 141) sees this kind of sampling as the researcher's judgment regarding typicality or interest.

The term purposive sampling is applied to those situations where the researcher already knows something about the specific people or events and deliberately selects particular ones because they are seen as instances that are likely to produce the most valuable data. For example, the five schools I worked with were characterised by conflict ranging from one case to another. In effect, they were selected with a specific purpose in mind, and that purpose reflected the particular qualities of the people or events chosen and their relevance to the topic of the investigation. The advantage of this sampling is that it allows the

researcher to hone in on the people or events, which he/she has good grounds for believing will be critical for the research (Mwanje 2001: 14). It is also not only economical, but informative.

From my point of view, the question that guided me in the selection of the schools was that, given what I already know about the research topic and about the range of people or events being studied, these schools were likely to provide me with the best information. Senior secondary schools (Grades 8-12) were used for their complexity as organisations, which are not as easy to manage as primary schools, and representative councils of learners (RCLs) are only permitted in such schools. There are also additional factors such as size of the school, advancing maturity of learners, peer group pressure and many others. The technique used to achieve a research goal depends on how the information is generated. Research conducted in this form frequently uses a number of approaches in the collection and analysis of data such as questionnaires, interviews, observations and written accounts by the subjects.

Transcriptions of narrative interviews and transcripts from focus group discussions are qualitative data from which I generated analysis. Combining data collection and data analysis allowed me to be more organised. Such understanding is gained through an ongoing activity of reading and re-reading of data to gain familiarity (Brink 1996). Typical steps were then followed such as coding for themes and protocols. Coding and categorising are generally initiated as soon as data collection begins and are used to organise data collected in an interview and other types of research methods employed in the study (Robson 1999). This means that I dealt with themes which emerged throughout the transcript. This is where the researcher looks for key statements that tell her/him about something interesting, surprising, enlightening or otherwise meaningful in relation to the research objectives and themes. Coding has been defined by

Cohen & Manion (1994: 286) as the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis.

Frequently, a massive amount of data in the form of words is gathered, which makes analysis time consuming (Brink 1996). Aanstoos (1983: 248) warns, however, that the analysis must remain faithful to the descriptive nature of the data, to disclose its essential meaning directly rather than on the basis of a hypothetical framework. In the process of unlocking this raw data, Aanstoos (1983) recommends Giorgi's (1970) procedure of identifying meaning units, specifying their central themes, and then articulating the structural coherence of those themes. Protocols have been reduced to natural meaning units, which formed the basis for general and situated descriptions of the respondents' experience of the phenomenon. Each protocol was then reviewed, to identify the experiential statement in the participants' own words.

To make certain that this study conformed to paradigm standards of conducting research, several questions helped me attain a high level of objectivity when conducting the study. For example, what chance could there be that the research would provide a fair and balanced picture? Could I avoid being biased because of my personal values, beliefs and background? Would the research be approached with an open mind about what the findings might show? Lastly, was I prepared to recognise the limitations of the research approach that was adopted?

Again, when conducting this study I tried to conduct it in a responsible way taking into consideration ethical issues. I have exercised due care in gathering and processing data, taking all reasonable steps to assume the accuracy of results. The following questions were used as a guide: What about the rights and feelings of those affected by the research? Could I avoid any deception or misrepresentation in my dealings with the research subjects? Would the identities and the interests of those involved be protected? Moreover, could I

guarantee the confidentiality of the information given to me during the research? Findings and methods used have been discussed in detail in subsequent chapters.

Finally, it must be remembered that none of these methods is without its contradictions or weaknesses. This makes sense for the reason that all these methods or forms of inquiry are what they are because of people's understandings, interpretations, analysis and viewpoints of what constitutes or does not constitute a method. I will contrast conceptual analysis and deconstructive analysis in order to clarify this point. In conceptual analysis a concept is chosen for examination, and the analysis involves quantifying and tallying its presence. It involves speculating on connections that have yet to be confirmed with research. In deconstructive analysis the insertion of texts into new contexts continually produces new meanings that are partly different from and partly similar to previous understandings. This means that in the deconstructive technique meanings are beyond the concepts and this is why I used three different kinds of methods for this particular study so as to look beyond surface illusions.

As this study is philosophical, the methods that are used are also of a philosophical nature. Philosophical analysis raises deep questions such as, what is it that is being analysed i.e. what sorts of things are the objects of analysis? For example concepts are the object of my analysis in the next chapter (chapter 2), and their philosophical analysis differs from the results of scientific investigation because of the use of conceptual analysis. Concepts such as democracy and participation are used as a theoretical framework in the next chapter. The latter methods (interpretive methods in chapter 3) will only enhance the philosophical approaches used.

I now move on to the summary and response of this chapter.

1.10 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Conducting research in male dominated school communities was one of the many hindrances I encountered when conducting this study. Investigating decision-making topics, where women are perceived as lacking in decision-making matters and skills, was humorous and proved to be too much for some males and females to deal with. They found it very strange when they learnt that the study is in the field of philosophy, as philosophy is regarded as a man's field of study. Even some of my colleagues doubted my capacity, capability and integrity in pursuing this study to completion.

As a woman I was not expected to look into matters regarding school governance as it is regarded as a male domain. Even during this period of democracy, some fields of study are nevertheless termed 'masculine' while others are traditionally termed 'feminine'. For example, leadership/management is 'masculine' while domestic work and teaching are 'feminine'. This gender division of labour in the internal domestic and external spheres is one of the most powerful symptoms of our socialisation into gender stereotyping. Because many females have remained in the home, doing household activities, they together with their occupations have been under-valued. I was also a victim of this.

For example, during the month long data collection, in each school I was assigned a female teacher to look after my needs just because I was a woman. One would take that as something that is normal. However, being a female and being assigned another female is gender related and gender biased and I was sensitive to this although I did nothing. The reason was that, male principals looked at me as a representative of the female sex and did not judge me according to my actual abilities and position as an individual.

Besides, I noticed that the effect of this deeply entrenched stereotyped view of women, which has accumulated throughout history, appears to remain at the core of modern society. I conducted research into a subject that is taken for granted to be male dominated and which is perceived as normal by school principals and the school inspectors. The district manager and the principals of schools were as a result shocked to learn that as a woman I was trying to analyse the contents of the South African Schools Act and Representative Council of Learners Guide, documents they regard as authentic.

I could feel that I was perceived to be unsuitable to tackle that subject as a woman. The question that they constantly asked was: "Is there anything wrong with them"? They regard the document released by the Minister of Education to be without faults. As a result I was perceived as just mischievous and irresponsible until I explained fully and pointed out the sections I believed to be problematic. I am happy to reveal that the schools I worked with in this study are now very curious and are awaiting the completion of this study.

1.11 Summary and response

In this chapter I explain the problem with SGBs vis-à-vis a lack of learner democratic participation in five selected schools in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape Province. I explore, firstly, the theoretical framework, which informs my research, namely critical theory, and secondly, the three methods I use to investigate the apparent lack of democratic school governance in selected SGBs in the Eastern Cape. My contention is that school governance (as I demonstrate later on) excludes rather than includes learner voices. In order to change such an unsatisfactory situation I have explored possibilities to include the voices of learners. I have used three methods (conceptual analysis, narrative inquiry and deconstructive scrutiny) to analyse liberal theories of democratic education, to find out through listening to the stories of others why there seems to be a lack of

learner participation, and to argue deconstructively for a contextually defensible form of democratic participation.

1.12 Outline of the research

Chapter 2: Theoretical understandings of democratic participation

Using conceptual analysis this chapter discusses some of the liberal theories of democratic education and democratic school governance, with reference to the seminal works of Jürgen Habermas, Iris Marion Young, Seyla Benhabib, Amy Gutmann, Martha Nussbaum and Benjamin Barber. It argues that liberal concepts of equality, freedom, democracy, individual rights, and the majority rule principle put forward by liberal theorists such as Miller, Macpherson, Holden, Nozick and Rawls could, when adopted in school governance, increase democratic participation. The chapter further looks at deliberative theories of democracy as argued by theorists such as Miller, Gutmann and Thompson, Elster, Habermas, Young, Benhabib and Rawls, in order to establish whether representatives of learners can deliberate meaningfully and whether deliberative democratic processes can produce new solutions to complex school governance problems. In this chapter I also conceptually analyse theories of democratic action and *ubuntu* and then establish links regarding their possible implications for democratic school governance.

Chapter 3: Interpretive paradigm

This chapter discusses the interpretive research approach used to enhance the philosophical inquiry employed in this study. Interpretivism is based upon general characteristics such as understanding and interpretation of daily occurrences and social structures as well as the meanings people give to the phenomena (democratic participation). It seeks to understand the phenomena and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the school setting through the use of tools such as questionnaires, focus group and journal entries.

This chapter further describes a narrative research approach method I used with the aim of uncovering the process followed when doing this study. The idea behind the use of narratives is to reveal or discover the untold story/stories of educators and learners, or part of what is actually taking place in the structures of school governance; and to retell it for the sake of democratic participation and inclusive unity. The rationale for the selection of such tools is explained. The narrative research approach method employed is aimed at uncovering the process followed when doing this study and finally, validity and reliability of findings is highlighted.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis: Exploring a lack of democratic participation in schools

The data constructed through three methods, namely questionnaires, focus group interviews and journal entries is analysed. I specifically analyse the interviews and narrative accounts of participants and establish meanings (philosophically) which show how participation alone seemingly undermines democratic engagement. In order to achieve this purpose, the in-depth, semi-structured interview is identified as an appropriate tool with which to gain entry into the participants' lived world, and make meaning of that world through dialogue. Semi-structured interviews allow the respondents freedom to elaborate on responses in whatever manner they wish. They also allow the researcher to move from specific questions to unplanned prompts. These prompts are very useful in encouraging open communication as well as insisting on remaining with the "concrete", a vital ingredient of phenomenological interviewing (Valle & King 1978: 6).

Chapter 5: Bridging the gaps to solve school governance problems

In this chapter I use ideas of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, and his philosophical practices regarding the interpretation of texts, sometimes known as

deconstructive critique, to identify existing gaps in the structure of school governance. I discuss and deconstruct issues concerning democratic participation of learners in school governance emanating from the themes that emerged from the previous chapter which formed the basis of an analysis of my findings. The findings are deconstructed in view of how the respondents perceive democratic participation and what possible roots the data follow in relation to deliberative democratic school governance.

Chapter 6: Towards a defensible understanding of school governance

In this chapter I provide a synopsis of the study by drawing conclusions from the findings and offering possibilities for integrating Africanisation with democratic participation, which I hope would help inform life in SGBs. A critique of the study and implications of chapter 4 for SGBs in South Africa are also presented. I further explore the implications of a deliberative democratic understanding of school governance for teaching and learning (pedagogy) and school management. This could best be achieved by answering the following question: what will be the impact or implications of deliberative democratic school governance for schools, teaching and learning, governance, management, leadership, and stakeholders such as parents, educators and learners?

Chapter 7: Deliberative democratic school governance and democratic justice

In this chapter, I take the idea of deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) and apply it to the whole school environment, by not confining it to school governance only I show how features of deliberative democratic school governance could address issues of violence in society and indiscipline in schools, conditions which invariably connect with the practice of learner participation or lack thereof on SGBs. I then explore the implications of deliberative democratic school governance for the achievement of democratic justice in education and in society as a whole.

I argue that democratic justice principles such as civic equality, civic liberty and opportunity will be of major importance for our schools and finally, I offer deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) principles and argues that the viability of deliberative democracy must depend to some extent on the accuracy of Gutmann's thoughts made in a 1996 book *Democracy and Disagreement* wherein she suggests that there can be no democracy without continued interpretation of the three principles of reciprocity, publicity and accountability in conjunction with democratic justice.

CHAPTER 2

ARGUMENT IN DEFENCE OF INCREASED DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL GOVERNANCE: A LIBERAL THEORETICAL APPROACH

2.1 Introduction

The first section of this chapter seeks to argue that liberal concepts of equality, freedom, democracy, individual rights, and the majority rule principle put forward by liberal theorists such as Miller, Macpherson, Holden, Nozick and Rawls could, when adopted in school governance, increase democratic participation. The basic conception is that each individual is to be treated equally, and with due regard to his/her actual personal preferences. However, the liberal principles have not gone unchallenged by non-liberals, who contend that liberal political equality by itself is 'not really' equality, or else that political equality cannot by itself exist in the absence of economic and/or social equality.

The second section deals with communitarian approaches to democratic participation. I argue that the 'self' cannot exist in isolation as proposed by some liberals. Modern communitarian views of democratic participation put forward by theorists such as Miller, Daly, Barber, Kymlicka, Gutmann, Sandel, Taylor and MacIntyre are used to back up the communitarian argument, and I also look at the relevance of communitarian theories for South African school governance.

The third section looks at deliberative theories of democracy as argued by theorists such as Miller, Gutmann and Thompson, Elster, Habermas, Young, Benhabib and Rawls. It seeks to provide some answers derived from the main research question of this study, which is: what idea of democratic participation can prevent the exclusion of learner voices in school governance? The idea behind this is to establish whether representatives of learners can deliberate meaningfully and whether deliberative democratic processes can produce new

solutions to complex school governance problems. Finally, I conceptually analyse theories of democratic action and *ubuntu* and then establish links regarding their possible implications for democratic school governance.

2.1.2 Liberal democratic participation

Liberal democratic participation, as seen through the eyes of liberal theorists, is perceived as giving expression to fundamental moral principles, as a way of ensuring or facilitating their operation. The idea is made explicit by Holden (1988: 174), who posits that the distinctive pronouncement on the moral importance of individuals is that people should never be treated 'simply' as a means, but always at the same time as an end (this derives from Kantian philosophy). The same idea is endorsed by John Rawls (1972) who bases his philosophical approach on a theoretical group of equal, rational individuals seeking to secure their own best interests in negotiating with other members of the group in democratic and participatory forms of governance (Johnson, Pete & du Plessis 2001: 199). Rawls, in his approach, develops a number of key concepts that I shall examine later in this chapter, for example the greatest equal liberty, the difference principle and the principle of fair equality of opportunity.

Liberals argue that for democratic participation to take place conditions for full and free development of all members of the society should be promoted and this must be done for all members. Such a notion is supported by Macpherson (1977) who posits that the realisation of this essence is seen to require both freedom and equality, freedom of each individual from subservience to the will of others, and equality in this freedom (Macpherson 1977: 58). This principle has played a central role in democratic liberal theory. Holden (1988: 15) insists that the existence of political equality may often be regarded as necessary if a system is to qualify as democratic and participatory, a necessary condition of governance.

The basic conception is that each individual is to be treated equally, and with due regard to his/her actual personal preferences. Due to such a belief, most democrats hold that the principle of equality, in this case, the principle that all people should be treated equally, is intrinsically valid. Holden argues that equality has to do with 'sameness' and its proper recognition of things, for example, persons and groups (Holden 1988: 15). For him, things are equal if they are the same in important respects. My understanding of Holden's argument is that democratic participation demands that things which are the same in relevant important respects ought to be treated equally, that is, in relation to those aspects in which they ought to be treated in the same way. The same should also apply to learners: they need to be treated equally by other members of school governance.

2.1.3 Liberal principles: concepts of democratic participation

Firstly, democrats assert that for democratic participation to take place there must be a very strong connection between democracy and equality. In support, Holden (1988: 16) insists that this link is usually tied in with the second element of the bond between equality and democracy. According to Holden, democrats hold that the principle is best maintained or promoted in a democracy and this means that a commitment to equality is closely linked with a commitment to democracy. The assumption or contention here is that equality is implied by the notion of a decision by the people. This, to Holden, flows from the liberal democratic theory of an individualist conception of the people. In this conception, the people consist simply of a certain number of individuals. Holden further argues that if the people, the whole people (i.e.) all the people rather than just some of them, are to make decisions, then all the constituent individuals must, to a crucial extent, have an equal say (Holden 1988: 15). Furthermore, anything else would mean that decisions were made by a group within that is smaller than the whole people, namely those individuals with a disproportionately large say (Holden 1988: 15).

Secondly, a very common response to this principle is that the will of the majority should prevail. My own understanding is that for democratic participation to be justified, the decision of the majority of the people should be accepted because it is counted as the decision of all the people. Liberals, such as Rawls, normally support this argument by advocating that majority decision-making normally is the fairest decision-making procedure, or that it is likely to arrive at the correct or most reasonable decision (Holden 1988: 38). By so doing justice will prevail. Rawls endorses this idea in his book *A Theory of Justice* (1972) when he defines the two principles of justice as follows: (a) each person is entitled to the most extensive system of basic liberties compatible with a similar system for everyone else, (b) social and economic inequalities are only fair in so far as they work to the advantage of the least advantaged people in society.

According to Rawls, the second principle, also known as the difference principle, requires that inequalities in the distribution of resources must be justified by reference to the resources and must also be justified by reference to the interests of the least well-off (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 185). Rawls asserts that 'the principle of fair equality of opportunity' is designed to secure equal access for everyone to all opportunities in the society. He calls this principle the principle of open positions, and sets out the reason for it as follows:

It may be possible to improve everyone's situation by assigning certain powers and benefits to positions despite the fact that certain groups are excluded from them. Although access is restricted, perhaps these offices can still attract superior talent and encourage better performance. But the principle of open positions forbids this. It expresses the conviction that if some places were not open on a basis fair to all, those kept out would be right in feeling unjustly treated even though they benefited from the

greater efforts of those who were allowed to hold them. They would be justified in their complaint not only because they were excluded from certain external rewards of office such as wealth and privilege, but because they would be debarred from experiencing the realisation of self which comes from a skilful and devoted exercise of social duties. They would be deprived of one of the main forms of human good (Rawls 1972: 84).

Rawls' objection to serving certain positions in society for certain people is based in the first instance on the principle of equality of opportunity. He rejects restrictions because they infringe on individual liberty by barring people from achieving self-realisation through the exercise of social duties (Johnson, *et al.* 2001: 185).

Thirdly, Holden (1988: 18) maintains that 'liberty' means freedom in a social context. The term 'individual liberty', according to Holden, refers to the freedom of individuals with respect to their social and, particularly, their political environment. Liberal democrats believe that for democratic participation to succeed, the word 'Freedom' to individuals should be translated to mean self-determination, for it is the free individual who determines his or her own actions. The self-determination of the people, according to Holden, consists in making its own determination of decisions and the point at issue here is the 'liberty of the people' as a collective entity.

The notion of liberal democracy involves an 'individualist' conception of the people. Holden (1988: 19) maintains that the central point is that a liberal democrat can make sense of the notion of the people making a decision only where there is freedom to present different viewpoints to the people, and where the people are free to make whatever decision they wish. In this way, freedom of speech, organisation and assembly, are seen as essential if democratic

participation is to exist. What Holden is advocating here is closely related to what Rawls (1972) calls, the principle of greatest equal liberty. This principle insists that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 184). The question is what is the principle of greatest equal liberty?

Rawls' first principle of justice, known as the principle of greatest equal liberty, deals with the distribution of individual rights, powers and freedoms. This principle insists that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 183). The principle contains the rights, powers and freedoms guaranteed to citizens in liberal democratic systems, and seeks to maximise the extent to which citizens may enjoy these rights and freedoms. Rawls argues that according to this principle, people in the original position will seek as a first priority the attainment of these individual rights and freedoms (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 184). In other words, the people in the original position always value their individual liberty over their collective equality.

Rawls further argues that the people in the original position privilege the principle of liberty because they see any restriction on liberty as obstructing their capacity to pursue all the other social goods (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 184). Rawls has based his defence of protected individual liberty on his theory of justice. He defines this approach as follows:

Offhand it hardly seems likely that persons who view themselves as equals, entitled to press their claims upon one another, would agree to a principle which requires lesser life prospects for some simply for the sake of a greater advantages enjoyed by others. Since each desires to protect his interests, his capacity to advance his conception of the good, no one has a reason to acquiesce in an enduring loss for himself [herself] in order

to bring about a greater net balance of satisfaction. In the absence of strong and lasting benevolent impulses, a rational man [woman] would not accept a basic structure merely because it maximised the algebraic sum of advantages irrespective of its permanent effects on his own basic rights and interests. Thus it seems that the principle of utility is incompatible with the conception of social cooperation among equals for mutual advantage (Rawls 1972: 14).

This notion described by Rawls is believed to be roughly the same as that which John Stuart Mill (1806-73) outlined from a different utilitarian, theoretical stance, which stresses the fundamental value of individuality (Holden 1988: 13). In his famous essay '*On Liberty*', Mill proposes a practical principle to define an area of individual liberty (Holden 1988). For Mill, the individual should be left free to do as he/she wishes in those areas where he/she does not harm others (Holden 1988: 13). Looking closely at the notion of liberty as propagated by Mill, I can easily relate it to the liberal concept of individual rights. The argument on rights, according to Simmonds (1986: 147), is sometimes expressed by the claim that all rights are derived from a basic right to equal liberty.

Fourthly, theories of individual rights maintain that individuals have a fundamental moral right to do as they wish in certain areas of life. According to this principle, there is still the insistence that all individuals, whatever their social or cultural differences, have essential basic human qualities in common by virtue of which they have certain basic rights. The idea is further endorsed by Simmonds (1986: 147), who argues that "we have a basic right to equal liberty in the sense that we have a right to do as we please, except where our actions interfere with the similar ability of others to do as they please". This is further supported by Simmonds who explains Nozick's theory as follows:

The basic assumption of Nozick's theory is that all persons have rights. These rights according to Nozick must not be violated as they operate as side constraints on what we do, in the sense that whatever we do in the pursuit of our aims, we must not violate the rights of others (Simmonds 1986: 55).

The basis of Nozick's theory of rights is the idea of the distinctness of persons. According to Simmonds, Nozick takes this notion to involve the idea that each person has exclusive rights in himself, and no rights in other persons. This implies the existence of rights to liberty, since no one may interfere with others except to prevent their interference with oneself.

In support of the rights principle during modern times, Ronald Dworkin, offers one of the most interesting philosophical theories of rights. His basic idea is that a right is a political trump which overrides consideration of the general welfare and its bearing on political decision-making (Simmonds 1986: 147). Simmonds posits that:

When we ascribe a right to someone, such as a right to freedom of speech, we are in effect holding that, that person ought not to be interfered with, in respect of his freedom of speech, even if such interference would be in the interests of the general welfare, or it would not be a genuine right (Simmonds 1986: 148).

Employing this analysis, Dworkin rejects the idea of a basic right to liberty. He argues that if people had such a right, it would mean that their liberty could not be restricted. The effect on Dworkin's analysis of saying that free speech is a right is to place the interest in free speech above the social balance of one interest against another (Simmonds 1986: 149). He compares their relation to the game of bridge, where individual rights are like the trump cards in bridge. He

believes that as the trump cards are more powerful, so too are individual rights more powerful than community goals that conflict with those individual rights (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 117).

Dworkin postulates that unlike rules, “principles do not apply in all-or-nothing fashion, they are protecting individual rights, they are numberless, and they shift and change so fast that the start of our list would be obsolete before we reached the middle” (Dworkin 1978: 44). But Dworkin’s argument has not gone unquestioned, and the discussion has tended to focus on two issues. First, there is the question of whether it is actually possible to distinguish between personal and external preferences. Second, it is not entirely clear why taking account of external preferences should be thought incompatible with the basic right to equal concern and respect. Nevertheless, what I admire most about Dworkin is the fact that he acknowledges that the principles protecting individual rights are not always easy to identify.

Employing a liberal argument to school governance I can say that liberal concepts such as equality, freedom and democracy may prevent some stakeholders from seeing themselves as more important than others when decisions are to be taken. If all members could see themselves as equal partners, democratic participation would be achievable. Furthermore, if the view of each and every group of stakeholders, including learner’s voices, could be heard, and if learners could view their contributions as important, and be allowed to freely express whatever decision or contribution they wish to make, then democratic participation will become a reality. In the structure of school governance, freedom of speech i.e. freedom to present different viewpoints and equality in negotiating with other members, is seen as an essential element if democratic participation is to exist.

I now move on to the arguments put forward by non-liberals.

2.1.4 Non-liberal critics of liberal theory

Firstly, liberal theory has sparked some controversies from other theorists, among them non-liberals who do not take kindly to the liberal notion of equality as defended by Rawls. Non-liberals often hold that equality without economic and/or social equality is problematic for liberals such as Rawls. They contend that liberal political equality by itself is 'not really' equality, or else that political equality cannot by itself exist in the absence of economic and/or social equality. Holden (1988: 17) asserts that the use of the term 'social democracy', where it is distinguishable from 'economic democracy', implies the existence of social inequality, roughly speaking a classless society, or something approaching it, in which there are few differences in status and/or social advantages.

Secondly, Rawls' *Theory of Justice* has been widely criticised. Robert Nozick (1974) is included among these critics. Although Nozick endorses the emphasis on individual liberty contained in Rawls' first principle of justice, he is vehemently opposed to the emphasis on equality in Rawls' second principle of justice. For Nozick, justice is concerned primarily with individuals receiving a just return for their efforts, and any distribution of resources based on the principle of equality compromises individual liberty (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 194). According to Nozick, justice requires that individuals should be at liberty to exploit their talents to the full and be duly rewarded, and this freedom should not be limited by a difference principle that tries to protect the position of the worst-off (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 186).

Thirdly, Nozick also believes that theories of justice that stress redistribution of resources, similar to Rawls' theory of distributive justice, are utterly misconceived. For Nozick, there is no central distribution; no person or group entitled to control all resources, jointly deciding how they are to be distributed (Nozick 1974: 149). Nozick further declares that every human being has an

inviolable right to life, liberty and property and these rights are exhaustive because they can never be overridden by any other consideration, be it social equality, public utility or communal justice (*ibid.*). Nozick also accuses Rawls of ignoring the distinctness of persons, particularly in insisting that individual abilities should be regarded as resources to be exploited for the benefit of the least advantaged.

Fourthly, those who do not favour majority rule compliment these responses. They argue that though Rawls and other liberals canvass for majority decision-making rule, they do not in themselves show that it is a democratic decision-making rule, i.e. that a majority decision can be conceived as a decision of the whole people (Holden 1988: 40). They dispute the fact that there can be a collective decision despite the existence of differing individual preferences. They argue that one of the liberal faults is that majority rule takes no account of intensities of preference and that it assumes that divergences of preferences can be neatly categorised into majorities and minorities.

Such argument further supports the views of Locke, who believed that since the majority is the greater number it is the greater force. The critics of the theory fear that from time to time the majority could eventually get its way at the expense of the minorities. This is my fear too. Although I do not support non-liberals in their criticism of the majority principle, I do support them when they question the abuse of the principle by those who intend to further their own selfish ends by using majority rule. What I know is that the majority rule principle works perfectly well where people are mature enough, and more rational, and in situations where people respect each other's opinions and suggestions.

I now relate the liberal argument to school governance and discuss how it can be of benefit here.

2.1.5 Relevance of these theories for school governance

In view of the theorists who defend liberal principles, the question I would like to pose is: What relevance do these theories have for school governance? The answer could be based on a number of factors, for example, Rawls' difference principle could provoke serious doubts about the treatment of learners in the structure of school governance. One needs to bear in mind that Rawls' difference principle insists that justice should maximise the position of the worst-off members of society. The worst-off in the case of school governance are learners. This means that if there is no justice in the structure of school governance there will not be any harmony not only in school governance but in the school at large.

From what I have alluded to in the previous chapter of this study (chapter 1), there is very little evidence of justice being achieved for the worst-off members in the school governance structure. I believe that Rawls' difference principle's injunction to maximise the position of the worst-off in society could provoke uncomfortable questions for other stakeholders in this structure because his principle of equality of opportunity (or the open positions principle) remains theoretical and is not practised by school stakeholders. My basic contention is that unless there is freedom of choice, equality and liberty as advocated by liberals, it cannot be said that learners are decision-makers in school governance.

Lastly, because of my understanding of the principles of liberalism, such as freedom of choice, I contend that there cannot be freedom of choice in the absence of freedom of speech, as has been suggested in chapter 1 of this study. Moreover, equality cannot exist in the absence of justice, for justice is concerned primarily with individuals receiving a just return for their efforts. In reality, justice requires that individuals should be at liberty to exploit their talents to the full and be rewarded. This means that in the structure of school governance, learners also need to be rewarded for their efforts.

The majority stakeholders need to be monitored because if they are not they could eventually get their own way at the expense of the minority, who in this case are learners. For democratic participation to be a reality, school governance stakeholders should be encouraged to be active and civic-minded so as to participate in almost all ventures without any forms of coercion. Such a philosophy promotes equality of opportunity for SGB members, irrespective of race, sex, ideology and age, to have access to direct control of the decision-making process in the affairs of the school, and more especially for school governance which is the subject of this study.

This means that for democratic participation to be seen as relevant, individuals such as learners should be free to pursue their own interests, hold their own opinions, and within broad legal limits, live their own lives (Kilcullen 1995: 14).

I now move on to the second section of this chapter i.e. liberal communitarians and their views on democratic participation. The question this section seeks to answer is: how do liberal communitarians constitute democratic participation as against the liberal constitution of the 'self', and what idea of democratic participation as advocated by communitarians could, when adopted, enhance greater participation in school governance?

2.2 Communitarian democratic participation

The term communitarian is derived from community, and it refers to any philosophical standpoint that defines a person in terms of social bonds and cultural traditions, rather than through individual traits (Daly 1994: preface). Communitarians believe that, for democratic participation to succeed, a social conception of human life should give rise to a distinctive set of concepts and values, and lead to a different vision of a good society. According to Barber (1988: 23), people are embedded in communities and tied to one another by bonds that precede and condition their individuality. They envisage civil society

as complex social relations that tie people together, first of all into families and kinship associations like clans, and then into clubs, neighbourhoods, communities, congregations, and more extended social hierarchies. Barber's view is supported by Miller who posits that communitarianism is seen as:

A thesis about the social constitution of the 'self', the self cannot be understood apart from the social relations in whom it is embedded. Putting this in different terms, the thesis is that we cannot understand human beings except against the background of social institutions, practices, forms of life which give them concrete identities. From a communitarian perspective, the individualist picture of the human condition is an incoherent one. It cannot make sense of the fact that we have identities that are not reducible to contingent matters of preference and beliefs (Miller 2000: 99).

2.2.1 Communitarian view of liberal individual 'self'

According to Miller (2000), the above view is the one put forward by liberal communitarians who view the 'self' as socially constituted in the sense that people acquire their conceptions of the good and their capacity for autonomy from their membership, typically, of several social communities. In other words, a flourishing set of cross-cutting communities provides the soil from which the autonomous self springs (Miller 2000: 103). The idea of the self is taken further by Kymlicka who posits that liberals such as Rawls believe that 'the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it', by which Rawls means we can always step back from any particular project and question whether we want to continue pursuing it (Kymlicka 2002: 221). The idea put forward by Rawls is often called the 'Kantian view' of the self, because Kant was one of the strongest defenders of the view that the self is prior to its socially given roles and relationships.

Because of the above view, communitarians have a number of different arguments against the liberal account of the self and its ends. They believe that this is a false view of the self because it ignores the fact that the self is 'embedded' or 'situated' in existing social practices, that we cannot always stand back from and opt out of them (Kymlicka (2002: 221). Some of the critics of Rawls' *Theory of Justice*, for example, came from communitarians. The communitarians claim that his model of people in the original position is based on an idea of individual subjectivity that fails fundamentally to recognise the social nature of human identity. Such a view is supported by Seyla Benhabib (1992: 161), one of Rawls' critics, who argues that:

Identity does not refer to my potential for choice alone, but to the actuality of my choices, namely to how I, as a finite, concrete, embodied individual, shape and fashion the circumstances of my birth and family, linguistic, cultural and gender identity into a coherent narrative that stands as my life story (Benhabib 1992: 161-2).

For Benhabib, to abstract real individuals from their actual societies, and then try to imagine what choices about justice they might make, is an entirely artificial exercise. According to her, it is only in the context of a specific community where the individual makes sense. Benhabib is backed up by Sandel (1982), who argues that the self is not prior to, but rather constituted by, its ends. According to Sandel 'we cannot distinguish me' from 'my ends', our selves are at least partly constituted by ends that we do not choose, but rather discover by virtue of our being embedded in some shared social context (Sandel, 1982: 58). This is supported by Miller (2000) who asserts that such a capacity can only be understood against the background of a community which provides people with the language of shared evaluation.

I fully support the liberal communarians' argument that the self does and cannot exist in isolation. My life experience tells me that people are moulded and shaped by values, ethos, beliefs, and cultural practices of the particular way of life of the society where they exist. In order to make the communitarian perspective clearer, I shall now look at Miller's three versions of communitarianism i.e. liberal communitarianism, whose keynote is the conception of the good; communitarianism of the right, whose keynote is an inclusive community, unity and authority; and the left version of communitarianism, whose keynote is equality of status.

2.2.2 Three versions of communitarianism

According to Miller, proponents of liberal communitarianism, among them Kymlicka, hold two central convictions that are characteristically liberal (Miller 2000: 102). One concerns the irreducible plurality of individual values or 'conceptions of the good'. In this type of communitarianism, Kymlicka argues that there are many valuable ways of life which people may choose to pursue, and these cannot be derived from any single model or more fundamental principle. The other concerns the importance of autonomous choice, in whichever way of life a person follows, and it is important that he or she should have chosen to follow this way of life after reflecting on alternatives rather than simply having been inducted into it (Miller 2000: 102).

Kymlicka posits that the key idea in the liberal communitarian vision of things is that a political society should be made up of a plurality of communities which ought, as far as possible, to have the character of voluntary associations. That is, they are communities which individuals are free to leave, and which they therefore remain within by voluntary consent (Miller 2000: 102). Kymlicka argues that people cannot engage in practices such as family life, religious observance or musical performance unless there are groups of people in their society who engage in such practices. Moreover, the capacity for autonomous choice, the

capacity to stand back from and reflect critically upon any particular way of life, is not something that people are natively endowed with, but is a capacity that is nurtured by autonomy supporting practices and institutions whose existence cannot be taken for granted (Miller 2000: 102).

For liberal communitarians, democratic participation cannot be fully achieved unless members are able to reflect critically upon the assumptions and ethos of a particular group to which they belong. This view is endorsed by Kymlicka (2002: 209), who believes that community exists in the form of common social practices, cultural traditions, and shared social understandings. This means that the community is the major influence on each and every individual, and even the individual's freedom depends on the freedom of the community as well.

The second version of communitarianism, i.e. communitarians of the right, also accuse liberals for failing to address the problem of social unity, i.e. what ties all the various associations and sub-groups together into a cohesive whole. According to Miller, the right communitarians look to inclusive community as a source of social union and they further see community as a source of authority (Miller 2000: 104). The constitutive features for right communitarians are unity and authority and, in addition, they list other characteristics such as a shared language, shared associations, shared history and common culture as factors typically contributing to national unity.

According to Miller, such features are virtually impossible to shed. The communitarians of the right differ slightly from liberal communitarians because of their principle of authority and nationality. They are perceived as nationalists as they not only focus on communal interests but also on national interests for the benefit of its members. Such communitarians, although they recognise principles such as authority, are critical of community institutions that are authoritarian and restrictive.

The third and last group of communitarians is the one on the left. The community it seeks to preserve or create is the one formed on the basis of equality, and they believe that the community should be actively self-determining rather than subject to the authority of tradition (Miller 2000: 104). Miller argues that left communitarians look for communities in which each member enjoys equality of status. This means that although members may have unequal standing in particular respects – one is regarded as more expert than another at solving engineering problems and one is seen as more capable than another at holding positions of responsibility and so forth – overall they regard and treat one another as equals (Miller 2000: 106). To clarify Miller's statement further, he means that, in this kind of community, there is an acceptance of unequal positions.

The most important thing though is that each person enjoys equal status despite unequal positions. In this kind of community, there are no hierarchical class divisions so that it could be said that one is better than the other. This is a form of democratic participation where members deliberate collectively about their aims and purposes. Miller goes further to advise to such communities that they should have some mechanism to allow deliberation to precede, some form of democratic self-government. The basic assumption is that people flourish best when they associate on the basis of equality, and have a deep interest in shaping their physical and social environment collectively. From a communitarian perspective, inequalities can only be combated if members of various groups can see themselves as belonging to the same inclusive community, which can then be organised to combat group inequalities in life-chances.

Furthermore, communitarians seek recognition from those around them, and the quest is for a form of community that unites people as equals, with every member being regarded as being of equal standing and worth because they

value personal autonomy. Miller's view is supported by Robert Nisbet who, according to Daly (1994), interprets community in terms of the function of families and other intimate associations which serve in their members' lives.

At this point I shall now elaborate more on the ideas of the modern communitarians' view of democratic participation. These ideas have been put forward by Will Kymlicka's vision of the common good, Michael Sandel's critique of liberal theory, Charles Taylor's vision of alternative liberalism and Alasdair MacIntyre's practical rationality. All four criticise the general tenets of liberal theory and suggest another approach to politics, morality and judgement. What I admire most about them is that their intention is not to replace liberalism, but to improve on it.

The above view is supported by Daly (1994: preface), who posits that the modern communitarian proposal of democratic participation not only moves community into the centre of political theory, but weds it with the traditional liberal values of freedom and equality. Moreover, Daly asserts that in order to do justice to the importance of democratic participation and social relationships, philosophy must be formulated in terms of the common good, commitments to particular others, social practices, shared meanings, and public spiritedness, rather than in the terms of traditional liberalism (Daly 1994: X).

Here I back up my argument using communitarian democratic participation. A school is a community where democratic participation is of vital importance. In reality, this is the kind of relationship that I wish could be adopted by our schools, where every stakeholder could treat others as equal partners, where hierarchical positions, age and gender could be forgotten and where deliberation of matters of concern could be the order of the day for the benefit of good, or better, school governance. If members of school governance can see themselves as belonging to the same community, i.e. a school community, I believe that

inequalities could be combated and members could see themselves as belonging to the same inclusive community. The implication is that each member of school governance will enjoy equal status despite unequal positions because a school is a community tied by bonds that precedes and condition individuality. For democratic participation to be achieved, each member should regard and treat each other as an equal, including learners.

I now briefly introduce what the modern communitarians propose for their respective communities in contrast to the liberal principles of democratic participation.

2.2.3 Modern Communitarian's criticism of liberal democratic participation

Firstly, liberal democrats regard rights as pre-political or natural. In other words, for them all people are bearers of inalienable rights simply on account of being people. They argue that rights are universal and should be universally and generally applied and enforced. On the other hand, communitarians reject the notion of individual rights and personal freedom. They argue that the problem with liberalism is not its emphasis on justice, nor its universalism, but rather its 'individualism' (Kymlicka 2002: 212). They posit that individualism involves seeing social collectivities merely as collections of individuals and not as a group. They base their argument on the ground that liberals neglect the extent to which individual freedom and well-being are only possible within a community.

Michael Sandel, for example, rejects the liberal view of man/woman as a free and rational being. He perceives the problem of liberalism as emanating from its faulty foundations. He argues that the problem with liberals is that they cannot admit that personal identities are partly defined by communal attachments. For

Sandel (1982) the family serves as a model of community and evidence of a good greater than justice (Daly 1994: 90). Furthermore Sandel asserts that the most troubling aspect of liberalism is its alleged inability to defend the basic principle that individual rights cannot be sacrificed for the sake of the general good.

According to Sandel (1982), if people responded spontaneously to the needs of others out of love or shared goals, then there would be no need to claim one's rights. Justice simply ensures that these decisions are genuinely voluntary, and that no one can force others to accept a subordinate position (Daly 1994). Gutmann, in support of Sandel, shows how rights can be defended on the communitarian's own ground as an established practice in our culture (Daly 1994: 89). She asserts that what a community accepts as fundamental rights which must be protected should be part of a political dialogue and debate.

Communitarians such as Gutman (1987) assert that communities are places where members debate and agree upon the basic conceptions of the good life, make moral decisions, deliberate on rights and values, and where they become truly human because of their participation in communal life. Hence, communitarians argue that the liberal 'politics of rights' should be abandoned, or at least supplemented by a 'politics of the common good' (Kymlicka 2002: 212). Yet, before moving on to the next point, which is the idea of 'the common good', it is of importance that I highlight the fact that communitarians believe in preserving rights and not abolishing them. They want, instead, for them to be extended to encompass the whole community and not individuals.

Secondly, in relation to the common good, Kymlicka suggests that, in a communitarian society, the common good is conceived of as a substantive conception of the good life which defines the community's way of life (Kymlicka 2002: 220). This common good, rather than adjusting itself to the pattern of

people's preferences, provides a standard by which those preferences are evaluated. The community's way of life forms the basis for a public ranking of conceptions of the good, and the weight given to an individual's preferences depends on how much she conforms or contributes to this common good.

According to Kymlicka (1989), a communitarian state can and should encourage people to adopt conceptions of the good that conform to the community's way of life, where discouraging conceptions of the good conflict with it. Kymlicka further asserts that "once we recognise the dependence of human beings on society, then our obligations to sustain the common good of society are as weighty as our rights to individual liberty" (Kymlicka 2002: 212). Sandel (1982: 183) concurs with Kymlicka, and he also argues that a politics of the common good, by expressing these shared constitutive ends, enables us to "know a good in common that we cannot know alone". Justice, according to Sandel, enables loving relationships, but ensures that they are not corrupted by domination or subordination. He suggests that we should give up the 'politics of rights' for a 'politics of the common good'. Sandel asserts that:

Deliberating with fellow citizens about the common good and helping to shape the destiny of the political community could contribute to the success of democratic participation. Kymlicka also warns that to deliberate well about the common good requires more than the capacity to choose one's ends and to respect other's rights to do the same, but, it requires knowledge of public affairs and also a sense of belonging, a concern for a whole, a moral bond with the community whose fate is at stake. To share in self-rule therefore requires that citizens possess, or come to acquire, certain qualities of character, or civic virtue (in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 419).

This view is supported by MacIntyre (1981) who posits that, in deciding how to lead our lives, we “all approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity, hence, what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles” (MacIntyre 1981: 204). MacIntyre here is advancing a conception of the community in which the individual’s achievement of her common good is inseparably linked to the achievement of the shared goods of practices and contributes to the common good of the community as a whole. He is also supported by Kymlicka who believes that communitarians are united by this belief that democratic participation must pay more attention to the shared practices and understandings within each society.

Thirdly, another criticism levelled by communitarians at liberals concerns that of justice and shared meanings. Kymlicka (2002: 211) cites Walzer who argues that a quest for a universal theory of justice is misguided. For Walzer (1983), there is no such thing as a perspective external to the community, no way to step outside history and culture. A society is just if it acts in accordance with the shared understandings of its members, as embodied in its characteristic practices and institutions. Hence, according to Walzer, identifying principles of justice is more a matter of cultural interpretation than of philosophical argument (Walzer 1983).

Walzer further asserts that the shared understandings in our society require ‘complex equality’ i.e. a system of distribution that does not try to equalise all goods, but rather seeks to ensure that inequalities in one ‘sphere’, such as wealth, do not permeate other spheres, such as health care or political power. Moreover, the Aristotelian idea that justice is rooted in a “community whose primary bond is a shared understanding both of the good for man/woman and the good of that community” explicitly informs Alasdair MacIntyre in his criticism of John Rawls and Robert Nozick (Daly 1994: 89). According to MacIntyre, each person has a “given role and status within a well defined and highly determinate

system of roles and statuses" which fully defines his identity (*ibid.*). MacIntyre therefore asserts that:

In our society, it does not logically follow that: 'I am someone's son or daughter, someone else's cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this clan, that tribe, this nation, hence, what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits those roles. One reason it does not follow is that none of these roles carries with it only one socially given good. What follows from 'what is good for me' has to be the good for someone else (Daly 1994: 92).

Sandel supports this perspective, maintaining that the shared pursuit of a communal goal is not a relationship people choose as in a voluntary association, but an attachment they discover, not merely an attribute but a constituent of their 'identity' (Sandel 1982: 150). However, there are objections to communitarian attempts to define justice in terms of a community's shared understandings. One of them is that it may be difficult to identify shared understandings about justice, especially if we attend not only to the voices of the vocal and powerful, but also to the weak and marginalised (Kymlicka 2002: 221). The idea of attending to the weak and marginalised is the focus of this study. Its purpose is that the voices of learners should be vocal and powerful, and in this way the atmosphere of shared understanding and justice will prevail and harmony will be achieved and this will result in better school governance.

I now move on to the liberal principle of neutrality and self-determination.

Communitarians object to the neutral state as perceived by liberals (Kymlicka 2002: 220). They believe that the principle of neutrality should be abandoned for a 'politics of the common good', hence the common good in a liberal society

is adjusted to fit the pattern of preferences and conceptions of the good held by individuals. Kymlicka is further supported by Taylor (1994) who criticises what he calls 'neutral liberalism' and argues that it cannot be reconciled with communitarianism. According to Taylor, the neutral state cannot adequately protect the social environment necessary for self-determination. He argues that the social thesis tells us that the capacity to choose a conception of the good can only be exercised in a particular sort of community, and for Taylor, this sort of community can only be sustained by a (non-neutral) 'politics of the common good' (in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 415).

Taylor suggests an alternative view of liberalism, and describes the role of neutral liberalism as facilitating individuals in their pursuit of their own conception of the good in equal measure with the effect that the aspirations of minority cultures, to preserve their own conception of the good and their own culture, are delegitimised (in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 415). It is a pleasure to clarify that Taylor's approach is still liberal because of his reliance on individualism and support of rational reflection. He is an 'alternative liberal' to the extent that he challenges and moves in his approach from mere instrumental and procedural politics.

Furthermore, communitarians also object to the liberal idea of self-determination and the supposed connection between self-determination and neutrality (Kymlicka 2002: 221). In particular, communitarians argue that liberals misconstrue the capacity for self-determination as they neglect the social preconditions under which that capacity can be meaningfully exercised. For communitarians, to deny self-determination is to treat someone like a child or an animal, rather than a full member of the community. Self determination for communitarians is exercised within these social roles, rather than by standing outside them. They believe that the public pursuit of the shared ends which define the community's way of life is not constrained by the requirement

of neutrality but that it takes precedence over the claim of individuals to the resources and liberties needed to pursue their own conceptions of rationality.

This brings me to a discussion of the idea of practical rationality.

2.2.4 Practical rationality

MacIntyre (1999) follows the Aristotelian tradition of practical rationality as he advocates a 'society of rational enquiry' based on practical rationality, where 'our' primary and shared common good is found in that activity of communal learning through which we together become able to order goods, both in our individual lives and in the political society. Such practical learning as perceived by MacIntyre is the kind of learning that takes in activity, and through reflection upon that activity and in the course of both communal and individual deliberation, (in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 416). MacIntyre holds that practical rationality guides action as it derives from the practices that structure society (in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 417). In other words, it is a tradition not based on abstract theory, but grounded in practice. For MacIntyre, good judgement can only be learned by participating in a particular practice and by engaging with others in reasoning. He then identifies three conceptions of practical rationality.

First, he identifies the Aristotelian conception according to which humanity entails acting rationally in society with others (in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 417). This, according to MacIntyre (1999), occurs in the identification of a good that must be pursued, followed by discernment of the best action to realise the good, and finally action. For example, justice requires acting in such a way that everyone and everything is given its due. He maintains that we act in order to pursue some good, and in this action lesser goods are often pursued for the sake of greater goods and the greatest good is that of the good life (in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004). Secondly, MacIntyre identifies the conception of practical

rationality favoured by David Hume who subjected means to reason. According to MacIntyre, the effect of this is that Hume reduces practical rationality to instrumental rationality.

The third conception of practical rationality that MacIntyre posits is that of contemporary liberalism. In this conception ends are not considered to arise from natural passions, but are considered as entirely subjective preferences. Significantly, both Hume and contemporary liberals give priority to goods of effectiveness over goods of excellence and support a notion of instrumental rationality. MacIntyre criticises liberalism for regarding individuals as distanced from their social relationships. He holds that practical rationality is reasoning about practice, about what should be done in society with others. Practical rationality as an approach embedded in concrete context and experience contributes significantly not only to political deliberation, but also to the notion of practical practice.

For me, if practical reasoning as suggested by MacIntyre could be done the way it is suggested, where people argue, debate and dialogue about matters of concern, our societies and schools, especially, could be better places. Unity is the source of strength in any community. Here, the search is not for a sort of common good that many communitarians seek, but rather for practical ways in which people may share in a common life. The key is whether we can learn to respect and engage with each other's ideas, behaviours and beliefs. Conceiving the school as a community in which practical rationality, communication and deliberation flourishes inevitably leads me to consider the nature of relationship between learners and learners, learners and teachers, learners and other school stakeholders e.g. parents.

2.2.5 Implication of communitarian theories for school governance

The question is: how can the communitarian principles of equal status be used to inject democratic participation for each member of the school governance? How can this be achieved in a situation where face-to-face discussions among members of school governance are out of the question? In other words, how can we achieve democratic deliberation of the kind that the left communitarian picture of an inherited national identity imposed on outsiders?

Here I believe the school stakeholders will need to explore new forms of democracy that could take the school governance stakeholders beyond mere window dressing to the importance of democratic participation, for example, communitarians believe that a person is thought to become fully human when participating in public debates and issues of public concern. This means that school governance stakeholders need to debate issues with no-one being sidelined or feeling prejudiced against. By so doing, results of decision making will be binding to all, and each and every school governance stakeholder will own the outcomes whether positive or negative.

Furthermore, supporters of communitarian theory reject the absence of moral considerations or visions of the 'good life' in liberal politics. They believe that moral considerations and questions regarding the good life should be part of public concern and debate. For them, the question of which values a community accepts should be part of a communal dialogue and debate amongst all members of the community. They believe that the community and other individuals are a source of autonomy. In this view, social norms are only legitimate and binding upon all citizens if they are the products of a process of democratic participation in which all citizens participate in a deliberative fashion.

For members of school governance inequalities can only be combated if all members can see themselves as belonging to the same inclusive school community, which can then be organised to combat group inequalities in life-chances. This means that all decisions emanating from participation by all members of school governance will be taken as legitimate and binding by all and thus consensus will be reached. If this can be achieved, no one can force others to accept a subordinate position: all SGB members will debate, argue and dialogue about matters of concern in the school.

Apart from the communitarian viewpoint, I maintain that solutions could be found by pursuing a deliberative approach because an alternative approach to liberalism and communitarianism is offered by theorists such as Habermas, Rawls, Young and Benhabib, and many others who have put forward the notion of deliberative democracy. Habermas's theory, for example, can be regarded as falling between the liberal overemphasis on individual autonomy and the communitarian assumption of unity and the search for the 'common good'. Iris Young, on the other hand, in her example of street life as the ideal state and her support of asymmetrical reciprocity, also provides an alternative to liberal and communitarian theories. They all advocate a deliberative democratic participation approach.

2.3 Deliberative democrats

According to Dryzek and List (2002: 2), Habermas and Rawls, the most influential continental and Anglo-American political philosophers of the late 20th century, have identified themselves as deliberative democrats. Dryzek and List posit that the essence of democratic legitimacy for deliberative democrats is the capacity of those affected by a collective decision to deliberate in the production of that decision. Furthermore they argue that deliberation involves discussion in which individuals are amenable to scrutinising and changing their preferences in the light of persuasion (but not manipulation, deception or coercion) from other

participants. They also assert that claims for and against courses of action must be justified to others in terms that the latter can accept.

Deliberative democrats are uniformly optimistic that deliberation yields rational collective outcomes. It is also believed that, following a usage that goes back to Aristotle, philosophic tradition generally takes deliberation to mean the process of the formation of the will, the particular moment that precedes choice, in which an individual or group ponders different solutions before settling for one of them. "We deliberate not about ends," said Aristotle, "but about the means to attain ends" (in Dryzek & List 2002: 2). The above view is supported by Elster, who cites Amy Gutmann as follows:

Here the demand is not simply that the parties to deliberation behave with a certain civil demeanor. Rather, the demand is for some pre-political normative criteria to which parties to deliberation subscribe and that enable them to recognize as reasonable some range of possible claims or positions that they do not merely tolerate, but treat with respect. Other claims and news are inadmissible so, on Gutmann's account, actual deliberation consists in the give and take of argument that is respectful of reasonable differences (Elster 1998: 170).

The above view, according to Elster (1998: 194), means that, in an ideal deliberative procedure, participants are and regard one another as free, recognising the fact of reasonable pluralism, and they acknowledge that no comprehensive moral or religious view provides a defining condition of participation or a test of the acceptability of arguments in support of the exercise of political power. Moreover, according to Elster (1998), participants regard one another as formally and substantively equal. They are formally equal in that the rules regulating the ideal procedure do not single out individuals for special advantage or disadvantage. Instead, everyone with deliberative capacities which

is to say more or less all human beings – has, and is recognised as having, equal standing at each stage of the deliberative process.

Furthermore, for deliberative democrats, deliberation is necessary for what is uncertain, when there may be reasons for deciding on one course of action but equally compelling reasons for deciding on another. German philosopher Hans George Gadamer observes:

The knowledge that gives direction to action is essentially called for by concrete situations in which we are to choose the thing to be done; and no learned or mastered technique can spare us the task of deliberation and decision (in Dryzek & List 2002: 2).

According to Miller (2000: 3), the above argument relies upon a model of democratic decision-making that has come to be called 'deliberative democracy'. For Miller a democratic system is deliberate to the extent that decisions it reaches reflect open discussion among the participants, with people who are ready to listen to the views and consider the interests of others, and to modify their own opinions accordingly (Miller 2000: 3). Miller further warns that in a deliberative democracy, the final decision made may not be wholly consensual, but should represent a fair balance between the different views expressed in the course of the discussion and, to the extent that it does, even those who would prefer some other outcome can recognise the decision as legitimate.

In the light of what has been said already, the question this section seeks to answer is: are deliberative democratic processes able to produce new solutions for complex school governance problems? The answer, I believe, can be obtained from deliberative processes of democracy (deliberative democracy) because, according to Elster (1998: 1), the Rawlsian idea of reflective equilibrium presupposes the possibility of moral deliberation and, in Habermas, the ideal

speech situation is intended to permit deliberation about ends as well as about means (*ibid.*).

2.3.1 Deliberative democratic participation

Elster (1998) asserts that for democratic participation to be legitimate it must be the outcome of rational deliberation about ends among free, equal, and rational agents. He then offers a broad definition of deliberation as follows:

The notion includes collective decision-making with the participation of all who will be affected by the decision or their representatives. This is the democratic part. Also all agree that it includes decision-making by means of arguments offered by and to participants who are committed to the values of rationality and impartiality: this is the deliberative part. These characteristics are somewhat rough, but I believe they capture the intersection of the extensions reasonably well (Elster 1998: 9).

According to Elster's quote above, democratic participation includes arguing and appeals to reasons for deliberation to exist or for deliberation to be fair and just. Secondly, Elster holds that for democratic participation to succeed, common decisions without initial consensus must proceed by either arguing for, bargaining or voting, while rational deliberation aims at preference transformation through arguing, which relies on impartial, disinterested and dispassionate reason – quite possibly disingenuously misrepresenting the speaker's true motive (Elster 1998: 9). Furthermore, all use of reason and argument results in deliberation, and this includes deliberation about both ends and means. Elster posits that:

Arguing aims at the transformation of preferences. Individuals have fundamental preferences over ultimate ends and derived preferences over the best means to realise these ends, the gap between the two being

filled by factual beliefs about ends-means relationships. Arguments that affect those beliefs will also affect the derived preferences. In a decision-making process, unlike a scientific seminar, to change derived preferences is in fact the only purpose of arguing about factual matters. In addition, decision making may involve deliberation about ultimate ends (Elster 1998: 7-8).

The implication of the above quote is that any shift in preferences not wrought by threats or promises counts as deliberation. According to Elster (1998: 5), when a group of equal individuals is deciding on a matter that concerns them all and the initial distribution of opinion falls short of consensus, it can proceed in three different ways: arguing, bargaining, and voting.

A third potential benefit of democratic participation is that deliberation helps participants clarify and refine their own positions on issues. Related to this, discussion may again offer new solutions to solve social problems in a democratic way. Because deliberation can be a creative process – with participants brainstorming and generating new ideas – the process may be able to overcome (or at least lessen) the impact of limited knowledge on decision-making (Fearon, 1998; Gargarella, 1998). According to these theorists, the process of discussion may reveal that there is no compromise on the known set of policy alternatives and it therefore creates an incentive to think of new solutions. Thus, the end result is not only solutions, but also a greater consensus over the policy decision.

In relation to deliberative democratic participation, Elster (1998: 4) posits that deliberate democracy rests on argumentation, not only in the sense that it proceeds by argument, but also in the sense that it must be justified by argument. At the same time he acknowledges the fact that it may not be obvious that arguing is the best way of making collective decisions. In his argument he is supported by theorists such as Gargarella (1998) and Fearon (1998) who offer

arguments in favour of discussion. They argue that discussion can be good because it reveals private information, lessens or overcomes the impact of bounded rationality, makes for better decisions in terms of distributive justice, makes for a larger consensus, and improves the moral or intellectual qualities of the participants.

Moreover, a more comprehensive list of potential benefits of deliberative democracy is offered by Gutman and Thompson (1996), Fearon (1998), Gargarella (1998), and Macedo (1999), who maintain that deliberation may not change individual preferences, but may create a greater understanding and, with this, more tolerance for opposing views. Furthermore, they also posit that through the process of discussion, deliberation can encourage a public-spirited way of thinking about social problems and through the process of exchanging ideas and beliefs, individuals may begin to think about social problems. At the same time, through the process of exchanging ideas and beliefs, individuals may begin to think about their community, or their state or country, and not just their own personal circumstances.

Fourthly, and most ideally, some deliberative theorists suggest that deliberative democratic participation can help democracies create better public policies and better participation. For example, Gutmann and Thompson (1996) argue that deliberation in its ideal form could help societies correct past mistakes. The hope is that through deliberation, participants will learn about the consequences of implementing policies and the reasons for the past failures. Thus, through the course of discussion, participants will present solutions that steer away from past mistakes. For example Habermas, a German thinker and philosopher, put forward his ideas on 'Communicative Action' and 'Consensus through Deliberation and Reasoning'. Habermas's theory can be regarded as being between the liberal overemphasis on individual autonomy and the communitarian assumption of

unity and the search for the 'common good' which I predict can produce new solutions to complex school governance problems.

The point of the idealised procedure for a deliberative democratic argument above is to help provide a model for democratic school governance as propagated by deliberative democratic theorists that could help produce a lasting solution for school governance conflict. The vision which they label "deliberative democracy", for example, relies on reasoned and inclusive public deliberation that is geared to reaching consensus decisions. Such ideas are ideal for building consensus for members of school governance because consensus should be subjected to argumentative communication or deliberation and reflection. In other words, for school governance stakeholders, consensus should not only be a prerequisite for discussion, but should also reflect the democratic discourse of informed deliberation and reflection responsive to the demands of all members jointly. Deliberation and reasoning as propagated by deliberative democrats could impact positively if applied when discussions are being taken by members of school governance.

For democratic participation to succeed in schools, and more especially among members of school governance, decisions should be taken collectively. Members will allow one other to scrutinise and change their preferences in the light of persuasion, not manipulation or deception from other members. The implication is that deliberation by all members will yield rational collective outcomes.

I now move on to Habermas and his theory of communicative action.

2.3.2 Habermas: Consensus, communicative action and rationality

Firstly, Habermas believes that for democratic participation to happen there should be consensus which should take place through deliberation and reasoning. For Habermas there is no doubt that participation invariably needs to

result in consensus. He asserts that rationality¹⁰ must be dialogical or 'communicative' through which participants advance arguments and counterarguments. His defence of communicative reason is quite forthright about communicative rationality as the consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech. He asserts that only the force of the better argument reaches consensual decisions, so that, at the end of deliberative process, all concerned are convinced by the decisions reached and accept them as reasonable.

His condition states that only those norms that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all concerned in their capacity as participants in the process can claim to be valid. He further argues that consensus ought to be subjected to argumentative communication or deliberation and reflection. In other words, he believes that consensus should not be a prerequisite for discussion, but should rather reflect the democratic discourse of informed deliberation and reflection responsive to the demands of an active citizenry (Habermas 1996: 299).

For Habermas, if an exchange of arguments or points of view should be unconstrained, then it follows that no individual or group of people could legitimately exclude others from deliberating on any matters that interest them. The rights of people to participate in deliberation are legally institutionalised

¹⁰ Communicative rationality is embodied just as much by the structures of the undefeated intersubjectivity of a pre-understanding guaranteed in the life world as it is by each respective actor him/herself. The concept of communicative rationality does not just apply to the processes of intentional consensus formation, but also to the structures of a state of pre-understanding already reached within an intersubjectively shared life world. The latter demarcates the respective speech situation in the shape of a context-forming horizon; at the same time, as an unproblematic and prereflexive background, it plays a constitutive role in the achievements directed toward reaching understanding. Life world and communicative action thus relate to each other in a complementary fashion. As a consequence, communicative rationality is embodied just as much by the structures of the undiffracted intersubjectivity of a pre-understanding guaranteed in the life world as it is by the achieved consensus by each respective actor him/herself.

without any individual being excluded (Habermas 1996: 147). For Habermas the success of deliberative democracy depends not on a collectively acting citizenry but on the institutionalisation of the corresponding procedures and conditions of communication, and that would allow citizens to deliberate in informal public spheres.

Furthermore, Habermas believes that each individual has “an equal opportunity to be heard” in the deliberative process. In his idea of deliberation, Habermas is supported by Elster (1998) who believes that ‘deliberation’ refers either to a particular sort of discussion – one that involves the careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against some proposition – or to an inferior process by which an individual weighs reasons for and against courses of action (Elster 1998: 63). Elster (1998: 63) also asserts that theorists such as Habermas, who are interested in deliberative democracy, are interested in promoting public deliberation – a particular sort of discussion – rather than just private or ‘interior’ deliberation.

Secondly, Habermas states his ideas on Communicative Action. In his *Moral Consciousness and communicative action*, he explains the concept of communicative action as follows:

Communicative action can be understood as a circular process in which the actor is two things in one: an initiator, who masters situations through actions for which he is accountable, and a product of the transitions surrounding him, of groups whose cohesion is based on solidarity to which he belongs, and of processes of socialisation in which he is reared (Habermas 1981: 135).

Communicative action is the one type of action that Habermas says uses all human ways of thinking, and language. This combination allows human beings

to understand and agree with one another and to make plans for common action. The act of coming together and agreeing (communicative action) takes the place of revolution as a mode of change. To explain this, Habermas recognises that a discourse-theoretic interpretation insists on the fact that democratic will-formation draws its legitimating force both from the communicative pre-suppositions that allow the better arguments to come into play in various forms of deliberations and from the procedures that secure fair bargaining processes (Habermas 1996: 24).

Habermas views language as a means of rational communication (Johnson, *et al* 2001: 235). His theory of communicative action for example is concerned with how language is used to achieve mutual understanding through speech acts, that is, acts of linguistic communication in which the speaker performs an action. For Habermas, only when language facilitates mutual understanding via effective communicative action can participants arrive at the truth. Habermas argues that truthfulness arises “in regard to the general pragmatic functions of the establishment of interpersonal relations, on the one hand, and the representation of facts, on the other” (Habermas 1976: 49). In other words, truth can arise when both interpersonal relations are established and agreed facts are represented. His faith in the possibility of truthfulness via communicative action underlies his model of rational deliberation and democratic procedure. He explains the connection between communicative action and democracy as follows:

The democratic process must simultaneously secure the private and public autonomy of legal subjects. This is because individual private rights cannot be adequately formulated, let alone politically implemented, if those affected have not first engaged in the public discussions to clarify which features are relevant in treating typical cases as alike or different, and then mobilized communicative power for the consideration of their

newly interpreted needs. The proceduralist understanding of law thus privileges communicative presuppositions and procedural conditions of democratic opinion- and will-formation as the sole source of legitimation (Habermas 1996: 450).

According to Habermas, without public discussions in which mutual understanding of key issues and needs is achieved, the democratic process, and by extension the legitimacy of the political system, will fail. This approach therefore places effective communication at the basis of political democracy. Habermas described the 'public sphere' as a discursive space in which citizens participate and act through dialogue and debate. He conceives the public sphere as both a process by which people can deliberate about their common affairs as an arena, and a space in which this can happen naturally. In his discursive aspects of the public sphere, he argues for a procedural model of democracy, and believes that in order to encourage public participation and broaden or strengthen democracy, politics must be viewed as a public conversation governed by legitimating procedures and reason.

It must be noted, therefore, that the concept of the public sphere as discussed by Habermas and other theorists includes several requirements for authenticity. These include open access, voluntary participation outside institutional roles, and the generation of public judgement through assemblies of citizens who engage in political deliberation, the freedom to express opinions, and the freedom to discuss matters of the state and to criticise the way state power is organised. My belief is that if these concepts could be applied in school governance, democratic participation would be achievable and communication would then be rational.

Thirdly, Roederer and Moelendorf (2004: 430) maintain that for democratic participation to be a success, Habermas strongly suggests rationality in order to set up a procedural model of politics (or a theory of discourse ethics or

communicative action). Although he is critical of the liberal tendency towards instrumentalism, he subscribes to some modern assumptions of universalism. Habermas rejects foundational claims and all grand narratives, but nevertheless affirms the claim to dialogical reason (*ibid.*). He argues that democratic deliberation embodies communicative reason.

For Habermas, the crucial categorical distinction here is between strategic and communicative action: the former being oriented toward success, at purposively inducing others to behave in a particular ways, and the latter at the cooperative search for mutual understanding. Furthermore, whereas strategic action coordinates social interaction by external influence or force, communicative reason does so via 'consent', which involves arriving at an agreement that is justifiable solely in the light of generalisable interests of the relevant parties.

Habermas's theory is supported by Cohen (1989: 33), who maintains that deliberation aims to arrive at a rationally motivated consensus to find reasons that are persuasive to all. Cohen asserts that deliberation may lead to a decision that is reasoned, and may also inform the reasons why the decisions are made or are not made. Furthermore, these reasons may guide the implementation of the decision and the actions of the government. For Habermas, the positives of modernity, namely the recognition of human rights and the enactment of general norms, are expressions of reason (rationality) (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 235). This means that a deliberative conception of democracy puts public reasoning at the centre of political justification. But, for Habermas, such a view cannot be distinguished simply by its emphasis on discussion rather than on bargaining or voting as methods of collective decision-making only.

According to the deliberative interpretation of democracy, democracy is a system of social and political arrangements that institutionally ties the exercise of power to free reasoning among equals. This conception of justification through public

reasoning can be represented in an idealised procedure of political deliberation, constructed to capture the notions of free, equal, and reasoning, that figure in the deliberative ideal. A further point that Habermas makes with regard to rationality is the majority rule principle: he argues that majority rule is based on revisable and compromising decisions, made not only to ensure that minority opinion is respected, including the modification of majority views to meet the objectives of minorities, but also to safeguard open and honest deliberation on an issue prior to making a decision by majority vote.

According to Habermas, the discussion has to shift from the question of the prevalence of simple majority decision-making in deliberative processes to one of what constitutes better and reasonable argumentation (Habermas 1996: 24). He makes a distinction between questions of 'ethics' (questions of the 'good' and the questions of 'justice' (questions of the right). For him, questions of justice are not dependent on a specific community and an adherence to one conception of the 'good life'. In contemporary plural societies, political interests and values will be in conflict and will need to be balanced. In this view, this balancing cannot be done through ethical discourses. Habermas posits that the balancing and bargaining between competing norms and interests rely on a regulation of fair terms that must be agreed upon beforehand.

I next discuss how Habermas's theory could be of benefit for school governance.

In the structure of school governance, Habermas's argument will rest on how to promote democratic participation and decision-making without impeding socio-cultural differences. In other words, his debates will hinge on democratically representing difference without thereby sanctioning injustice and intolerance for SGB stakeholders. Again, for members of school governance, preferences will then be transformed through the active exchange of ideas, including not just voicing opinions, but listening, because through the act of engaging and listening

stakeholders can be persuaded and their thinking transformed. This combination will allow stakeholders to understand and agree with one another and to make plans for common action for the benefit of their school.

Furthermore, consensus will be achievable in the structure of school governance through deliberation and reasoning of all stakeholders. It will be through the ability of stakeholders to advance arguments and counterarguments that democratic participation can be achieved. When this notion is achieved, each individual in governance will have an equal opportunity to be heard and all will be able to critique one another during the deliberative process. Deliberative arguments could enable SGB stakeholders, and more especially learners, to be free to express their opinions, and have freedom to discuss matters for the common good of their school.

At this point I move on to Iris Marion Young and her theory of inclusion. Like many other political theorists, Young responds to Habermas by pointing to deliberative democracy as a possible answer. But, unlike Habermas's deliberative democratic procedures, Young (2000) discusses how deliberative democracy could be used to widen democratic inclusion and break the cycle of political inequality. She argues that participants should not put their differences aside to invoke a common goal, but rather different social segments in society should struggle through discussion by engaging with one another across their differences.

2.3.3 Iris Marion Young: Inclusion, asymmetrical reciprocity, rhetoric and narratives

Firstly, Young, unlike Habermas who advocates for consensus at all costs, like most contemporary deliberative theorists, in addition to calling for consensus calls for the inclusion of individuals and/or groups who will be affected by the policy decision under consideration as an important and necessary requirement

to achieve true democratic legitimacy. Young describes inclusion as the cornerstone of democracies and emphasises that the prevention of exclusion is paramount.

Inclusion¹¹ and democracy, according to Young, broaden the understanding of democratic participation by reflecting on the positive political functions of narrative, rhetorically situated appeals, and public protest. According to her, they reconstruct concepts of civil society and the public sphere as enacting such plural forms of communication among debating citizens in large-scale societies. Young suggests that, in order to achieve inclusion, there must be a consensus as to the supremacy of the transformative ideal before there can be democracy (Young 2000: 3). However, consensus is described by theorists as an agreement to address a certain topic or follow a direction for a limited time. Young then explores the idea of listening to one another as she suggests that listening to the other is more respectful of one's unique individual position because it is the only way to respect the uniqueness and "irreplaceability" of each person (Young 1999: 1-2).

According to Young (1999), the ideals of deliberation, most notably the goals of reciprocity and reasonableness where participants engage in public discussion, may not only express their own view, but also listen and learn from others. For her, mutual justification means not merely offering reasons to other people, or even offering reasons that they happen to accept (for example, because they are in a weak bargaining position), but it means providing reasons that constitute a

¹¹ The conditions of inclusion, according to Young (2000), entail the interaction among participants in a democratic decision-making process in which people hold one another accountable. This increases the chances that those who make proposals will transform their positions from an initial self-regarding stance to a more objective appeal to justice, because they must listen to others with differing positions to which they are answerable. Even if they disagree with the outcome, political actors must accept the legitimacy of a decision if it was arrived at through an inclusive process of public discussion. The norm of inclusion for Young is therefore also a powerful means for criticising the legitimacy of nominally democratic processes and decisions.

justification for imposing binding laws on them. She believes that mutual justification requires reference to substantive values (Young 1999: 34).

According to Young (1999), Habermas's cycle could be broken precisely because an inclusive deliberative process would produce more just policies. She is supported by Gutmann and Thompson (1996), who argue that deliberative democracy could be most useful in addressing difficult moral issues where there is substantial disagreement. In other words, in their view deliberation should be used specifically for those issues that Young identifies as requiring struggle, since deliberative democracy calls for a more inclusive and purposeful set of representatives to engage in discussions of public importance.

In contrast to a liberal ideal politics of impartiality (neutrality) or a communitarian or civic republican notion of a specific community (that can be exclusive), Young suggests the notion of heterogeneity and difference and employs the metaphor of the city and the city life to assist in visualising this notion. For her, the city life represents the openness for difference and otherness that her vision of politics entails in contrast to the closure and exclusiveness of the liberal and the communitarian and civic republican models. For Young, city life is a better metaphor to illustrate her notion of difference than, for example, rural life illustrating homogenous communal life.

Young's suggestion of an ideal of city as a vision of social relations that can affirm difference without exclusion stands as a corrective to the notion of contained politics as is found in some liberal, communitarian and civic republican visions. The metaphor of city life and a heterogeneous public illustrates an approach to politics where the political need not be contained within the confines of instrumental politics or exclusive community. For Young, city life reflects the paradox of being together and being separate, being bound and unbound simultaneously, of being one but not the same. It is not a neutral or impartial

approach as supported by some liberals, and it is not an approach based on one understanding of community and the 'common good'. There is a space for diverse and contested political and moral deliberations. Their being together entails some common problems and common interests, but they do not create a community of shared final ends, of mutual identification and reciprocity.

Secondly, in Young's *Theory of Deliberative Democracy* (2000), she is concerned with this problem of privileging unity and assuming a public norm of order. She writes:

Under circumstances of social inequality, the idea of a common good or general interest can often serve as a means of exclusion. Assuming a discussion situation in which participants are differentiated by position or culture, and where some groups have greater symbolic or material privilege than others or where there are socially or economically weak minorities and definitions of the common good are likely to express the interests and perspectives of the dominant groups in generalised terms. The less privileged are asked to put aside the expression of their experience, which may require a different way of speaking, or their grievances and demands must be suspended for the sake of a common good whose definition is biased against them (Young 2000: 43).

Similarly, Young (2000) argues that deliberation in its ideal form could lead to more just outcomes. It is widely accepted that social and economic inequality lead to political inequality. Indeed, a central quandary in most modern democracies is the simultaneous belief in political equality and economic differentiation (Hoshscild 1981; Verba, Sydney & Orren 1985). Yet, economic differentiation often leads to political inequality. In fact, the poor are systematically under-represented in most political decision-making processes (Young 2000). According to the above writers, the principles of deliberative

democratic theory specify terms of cooperation that satisfy reciprocity. Such terms are similar to what John Rawls calls fair terms of social cooperation. In support of Young, Rawls believes that a theory is deliberative if the fair terms of social cooperation include the requirement that citizens or their representatives actually seek to give one another mutually acceptable reasons to justify laws they adopt.

Thirdly, an important aspect of Young's approach is her conception of asymmetrical reciprocity¹² in moral theory. According to her, asymmetrical reciprocity is one of the principles belonging in a democratic theory. She, like Fishkin and Laslett (2003: 33), maintains that reciprocity requires that citizens owe one another justification for the mutually binding laws and public policies they collectively enact. The aim of a theory that takes reciprocity seriously is to help people seek political agreement on the basis of principles that can be justified to others who share the aim of reaching such an agreement (Fishkin & Laslett 2003: 33). For Fishkin and Laslett (2003), mutual justification means not only merely offering reasons to other people, even offering reasons that they happen to accept (for example, because they are in a weak bargaining position), it means providing reasons that constitute a justification for imposing binding laws on them. Furthermore, they maintain that mutual justification requires reference to substantive values.

On that basis, Young criticises the notion of moral respect as a relation of asymmetry between the self and the other and accordingly criticises a communicative theory of moral respect that subscribes to the idea of

¹² Symmetrical reciprocity, which entails that each of us should take the perspective of all others in making moral judgements, makes the mistakes of obscuring difference by assuming the possibility of reversing positions, of standing in each other's shoes. By acknowledging the asymmetrical reciprocity between subjects, we accept that, while there may be many similarities and points of contact between subjects, each position and perspective goes beyond the possibility to share or imagine.

‘imaginatively’ taking the position of the other. She contends that people need a politics that can ensure a continuous becoming of the self and self-revision and argues that communitarian and civic republican politics cannot provide for this. In her argument on the principle of reciprocity she is supported by Gutmann and Thompson. For Gutmann and Thompson (1999), a reciprocal justification is one that appeals to the public’s interests. Strengthening their theory, they maintain that Martin Luther King Jr was an able representative because his participation in deliberative processes was governed by a notion of reciprocity. They write:

Martin Luther King Jr’s leadership of the civil rights movement exemplifies a politics of deliberative engagement. He mobilized African Americans around a moral cause that he publicly justified in reciprocal terms, appealing to principles that could move his country closer to a society with liberty and justice for all citizens (Gutmann & Thompson 1999: 254).

Under Gutmann and Thompson’s principle of reciprocity, participants reason beyond their narrow self-interest and consider the public good. But they also believe that reciprocal reasoning would require participants to justify their view to listeners who disagree with them. Speaking of a heterogeneous public, Young is sceptical of the reduction inherent in the liberal and a communitarian or civic republican approach to politics. Her concern is how a denial of difference contributes to oppression. Thus she supports a politics that recognises rather than suppresses difference that can be justified to others who share the aim of reaching such an agreement.

She and other theorists such as Fishkin and Lascett (2003) mention various advantages of reciprocity, such as the fact that reciprocity (a) guides thinking in the ongoing process in which citizens as well as theorists consider what justice requires in the case of particular laws in specific contexts, (b) shows the need for other principles to fill out the content of a deliberative democratic theory, and (c)

points to the need to develop such principles as publicity, accountability, basic liberty, basic opportunity, and fair opportunity, which are necessary for the mutual justification of laws. Furthermore, Fishkin and Lascett (2003: 33) believe that in order to determine what kind of principles belong in a deliberative democratic theory, people need to consider the meaning and implications of the fundamental principle of reciprocity. According to Fishkin and Lascett, reciprocity holds that citizens owe one another justifications for the mutually binding laws and public policies they collectively enact. The aim of a theory that takes reciprocity seriously is to help people seek political agreement on the basis of principles.

According to Roederer and Moellendorf (2004), Young criticises the civic republican approach to politics in its adoption of the notion of 'enlarged thought' that seems to suggest that a person can know what the position of the other means. It is this understanding of 'enlarged thought'¹³ that underlies most legal attempts to deal with difference and otherness. To interpret 'enlarged thought' as taking the standpoint of the other is not a move from a subjective point of view to a more objective one: the idea of taking the standpoint of the other presumes that it is possible to identify in such a way with the other that it is possible to substitute one for the other. Young quotes Arendt, saying:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it. The world, like every in-between, relates and

¹³ To make the enlarged thought explicit, she highlights the approach of Seyla Benhabib, who, in her reading of Hannah Arendt's work on enlarged thought, rejects the liberal idea of transcendent impartiality (an abstract position of neutrality) and subscribes to the idea of an enlarged thought in which a person thinks from the particular standpoint of the other person. Young, however, criticises Benhabib's reading and argues for a reading of enlarged thought that is more true to Arendt's political thought.

separates the interpretation of 'enlarged thought' that Young suggests means not only taking account of one another's processes and relationships that lie between us and which we have come to know together by discussing the world (Young in Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 139).

Young also believes in narratives. For her the importance of dialogue not only tells us something but it also tells the histories of others. Furthermore, it helps construct an account of the web of social relations between people (Roederer & Moellendorf 2004). This web of social relations, according to them, is what Arendt calls the web of human relations which both relates and separates people and reveals the connected implications and effects of multiple narratives and critical questioning. At this point I need to highlight the fact that narratives will be the focus of the next chapter.

Finally, Young puts forward a concept of rhetoric in her idea of listening to one another. Rhetoric, according to Young, allows speakers to listen carefully to what others have to say, thus building respect for the viewpoints of others. This, according to Young, enables participants to recognise what they have to say to one another, which in turn establishes conditions for deliberation and relations of trust. Young further sees justice not as fairness, but as liberation, defined in part as the development of the capacities of all individuals. In this way, she develops the idea of inclusion of all voices. This concern with one's "interchangeability" with others does not, however, inspire in Young the kind of individualism in which individuals are seen as being exclusively responsible for their fates, left to "wrestle with their bootstraps" (Young 1999: 1). Young's concern with the development of individuality itself, and with the flourishing of individuals, leads her to examine those social and economic constraints that prevent such development from taking place.

In summary, according to Young, the process of deliberation also has epistemic value. Decisions are more likely to be morally justifiable if decision makers are required to offer justification for policies to other people, including those who are both well informed and representative of the citizens who will be most affected by the decisions. According to Young, the practice of deliberation is an ongoing activity of reciprocal reason-giving, punctuated by collectively binding decisions. Furthermore, it is a process of reaching mutually binding decisions on the basis of mutually justifiable reasons. Because the reasons have to be mutually justifiable, the process presupposes some principles with substantive content. The question now is: how do I relate Young's theory to the structure of school governance?

The most important thing is that Young is against the exclusion of people. In the structure of school governance, Young's ideas will be of much help because she suggests that in order to achieve inclusion there must be consensus and inclusion of all stakeholders. This means that for SGB stakeholders the inclusion of all members when decisions are taken will be a priority. If this cannot be done by all participants in school governance, consensus will be a distant dream.

The idea of listening to one another as suggested by Young could further help stakeholders to listen and in this process learn from one another. At the same time, if stakeholders could listen to one another this would mean that democratic participation would be achievable. The idea of listening to one another will also be enhanced as it is the only way to respect the uniqueness of each person. If this can be achieved each and every stakeholder begins to respect the others, and then each unique individual position will begin to own decisions taken on a consensual basis.

Moreover, the ideals of deliberation as suggested by Young, most notably the goals of reciprocity and reasonableness where participants engage in public

discussion, will enable stakeholders not only to express their own views but also to listen and learn from others. For SGB participants mutual justification will mean not merely offering reasons to other members, or even offering reasons that they happen to accept, but will mean providing reasons that constitute a justification for imposing binding laws on all stakeholders involved.

Finally, if Young's ideas could be accepted in the school governance structure, deliberation in its ideal form could lead to more just outcomes for the benefit of not only school governance but for the school community at large. They will be able to reconstruct concepts in the SGB structure by privileging communication among members, and because of such initiative inclusion will be achieved. For example, inclusion and democracy will broaden stakeholders' understanding of democratic participation where members will be able to listen to one another and in the process take binding decisions for the benefit of the school.

Next I discuss Seyla Benhabib and her theory of democratic reflexivity.

2.3.4 Seyla Benhabib: Democratic reflexivity

Benhabib's philosophical theory of reflexivity and the moral self is relevant at this stage as an extension of Habermas's discourse theory and Young's voices of the others. According to both Young and Benhabib, Habermas acknowledges value pluralism and the need to arrive at outcomes despite difference. His deliberative democracy is intended precisely to allow for plural viewpoints to be heard. However, theorists such as Young and Benhabib have accused him of erasing difference. The problem, it is alleged, is that the exercise of seeking a single consensus and overcoming ethical background can silence consensus and marginalise some community members.

Benhabib's concern is that Habermas's theory assumes consensus because his (Habermas's) condition states that only those norms that meet (or could meet) with the approval of all concerned in their capacity as participants in the process can claim to be valid. Benhabib (1996) considers that consent must be treated not as an end-goal, but as a process for the co-operative generation of truth or validity. Furthermore, she is of the opinion that it is not the result of the process of moral judgement that counts, but the process for the attainment of such judgement. For Benhabib, communicative ethics is the processual generation of reasonable agreement about moral principles via an open-ended moral conversation. She also believes that the emphasis shifts to examine the normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement as a way of life can flourish and continue.

Firstly, Benhabib extends discourse theory in several ways and, in so doing, validates it in contexts where difference is at issue, by moving human consciousness forward to include the developing cognitive consciousness of a human being. She thus extends the options for the marginalised individuals in challenging their 'situatedness' by insisting on their discursive power in the name of future identities and communities. Benhabib asserts that a moral point of view is the contingent achievement of an interactive form of rationality, i.e. a moral conversation, exercising the art of 'enlarged thinking' and reversibility of perspectives, seeking to understand the standpoints of concrete others (Benhabib 1996: 70-71).

Secondly, according to Benhabib, conventional moralities should stop the conversation by identifying insiders and outsiders and therefore decisions can be reconsidered in a reflexive way in order to provide for more justifiable and convincing arguments. Benhabib (1996) argues that not all forms of deliberative engagement should necessarily result in permanent consensus as Habermas suggests. For her, deliberative engagement can also result in a temporary

consensus whereby deliberative agents reflexively reconsider a less persuasive argument in order to achieve a more reasoned and justifiable conclusion, and this entails a revolution in consciousness. Benhabib requires that we judge from the perspective of *other*¹⁴.

Thirdly, Benhabib's model requires that we recognise all beings capable of speech and action to be participants in the moral conversation, i.e. the principle of universal respect. This means that if all stakeholders argue about a particular issue and a set of normative assertions, they must eventually come to a reasonable agreement and that reasonable agreement must be arrived at under conditions that correspond to our idea of a fair debate. Such rules, according to Benhabib (1996), represent the moral ideal that we ought to respect each other as beings whose standpoint is worthy of equal consideration, and that furthermore we ought to treat each other as concrete human beings who have the capacity to express their standpoint.

Lastly, Benhabib posits that one ought to embrace, whenever possible, social practices embodying the discursive ideal (Benhabib: 1992). This, for Benhabib, means that everyone must be allowed to speak, and if other voices are neglected in groups that form of government will not be sustainable. According to Benhabib, the fairness of moral norms and the integrity of moral values can only be established through a process of practical argumentation, which allows its participants full equality in initiating and continuing the debate and suggesting new subject matters for conversation (Benhabib 1992: 73). The question then is how I apply Benhabib's theory to the structure of governance, and what its

¹⁴ "Other", according to Benhabib, is a term she borrowed from George Herbert Meade. This is the dominant conception of the self-other relation in contemporary moral theory. It requires us to view every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe to ourselves.

implications will be. For the school governance structure Benhabib's model requires that all stakeholders should recognise all members capable of speech and action to be participants in the moral conversation, i.e. learners will also need to be respected. This will mean that if all stake-holders argue about a particular issue and a set of normative assertions, they must eventually come to a reasonable agreement and that reasonable agreement must be arrived at under conditions that correspond to the idea of a fair debate.

Such rules, according to Benhabib, represent the moral ideal that people ought to respect each other as beings whose standpoint is worthy of equal consideration and that furthermore we ought to treat each other as concrete human beings who have the capacity to express their standpoint. If this could be taken seriously by all stakeholders, learners would no longer feel they are outcasts in the structure of governance but instead they would see themselves as important and respected participants.

Finally, I consider John Rawls and his idea of reflective equilibrium and how his principle of the theory of justice could help achieve consensus in SGBs.

2.3.5 John Rawls: Reflective equilibrium and principles of justice

Rawls posits that deliberation occurs as a process of reflective equilibrium. According to Follesdale (2004: 2), one mechanism of reasoning concerning ultimate ends is the method of reflective equilibrium, found in Aristotle and elaborated by Rawls. The process of reflective equilibrium occurs in people who take as their starting point considered moral judgements found initially credible, and adjust them according to several standards of rational acceptability, yielding normal theory, a consistent, logically related set of judgements. "The ideal deliberative procedure provides a model for institutions, a model that they should mirror, so far as possible" (Follesdale: 2004). Furthermore, Follesdale believes

that it may be empirically true that institutions that foster citizens' processes of reflective equilibrium are those that most reliably secure just policies.

In his *Theory of Justice*, John Rawls (1972) delineates a number of other conditions as well, for example adequate information, a norm of political equality in which the force of the argument takes precedence over power and authority. Furthermore, he maintains that an absence of strategic manipulation of information, perspective, processes, or outcomes in general; and a broad public orientation toward reaching right answers rather than serving narrow self-interest might lead to disagreements. This theory, according to Rawls (1972), is a theory of justification in ethics. Viewed most generally, a 'reflective equilibrium' is the end-point of a deliberative process in which one reflects on and revises beliefs about an area of inquiry, moral or non-moral. He asserts that public deliberation about some ultimate values does indeed occur according to the micro-mechanisms of the method of reflective equilibrium.

According to Cohen (1989a), preferences are checked and developed in arenas of "public deliberation focused on the common good". Suitable arenas for such public deliberation must allow free and open discussion among participants, and be able to question any premise in a search for reflective equilibrium, with few if any judgements ruled out from the start. For Cohen, these conditions of deliberation may overlap extensively with many, if not all, of Habermas's ideal speech conditions. Part of the democratic process is, then, that, "Citizens or their representatives actually seek to give one another mutually acceptable reasons to justify the laws they adopt" (Gutmann & Thompson 1999).

One crucial element of this theory of deliberative democracy is that citizens vote in ways they believe justice requires, where judgement is made on the basis of reasons and considerations that all can accept as democratic citizens. Rawls' work on *Theory of Justice* (1972) proved to be enormously influential, and in the

decades since it was first published it has set the agenda for liberal debates about justice and modern democratic governance. In 1993, Rawls updated his arguments in *Political Liberalism*, largely in response to the criticisms directed at his earlier work.

Firstly, Rawls bases his philosophical approach on a theoretical group of equal rational individuals seeking as individuals to secure their own best interests in negotiating with the other members of the group. He defines this approach in opposition to utilitarianism as follows:

Off-hand it hardly seems likely that persons who view themselves as equals, entitled to press their claims upon one another, would agree to a principle which requires lesser life prospects for some simply for the sake of a greater sum of advantages enjoyed by others. Since each desires to protect his interests, his capacity to advance his conception of the good, no one has a reason to acquiesce in an enduring loss for him in order to bring about a greater net balance of satisfaction. In the absence of strong and lasting benevolent impulses, a rational man would not accept a basic structure merely because it maximised the algebraic sum of advantages irrespective of its permanent effects on his own basic rights and interests. Thus it seems that the principle of utility is incompatible with the concept of social cooperation among equals for mutual advantage (Rawls 1972: 14).

Secondly, Rawls imagines that the people in the original position hold their discussions behind what he calls a veil of ignorance. He describes the purpose of the veil of ignorance as follows:

Somehow we must nullify the effects of specific contingencies which put men in original position at odds and attempt then to exploit social and

natural circumstances to their own advantage. Now in order to do this I assume that the parties are situated behind a veil of ignorance. They do not know the various alternatives will affect their own particular case and they are obliged to evaluate principles solely on the basis of general considerations (Rawls 1972: 136-7).

In other words, if these individuals are insulated from their own particular selfish interests, they will negotiate with each other without any hidden agendas that seek to further their interest of particular races, classes, genders or interest groups. As the people in the original position are behind a veil of ignorance, they are ignorant of their class, race and gender, and discrimination on these grounds can have no place in the principle of justice that they formulate.

Inevitably, then, racial and sexual discrimination presupposes that some hold a favoured place in the social system which they are willing to exploit to their advantage. From the standpoint of persons similarly situated in an initial situation which is fair, the principles of explicit racist doctrines are not only unjust. They are irrational. They have no place on a reasonable list of traditional conceptions of justice (Rawls 1972: 149-150).

Thirdly, Rawls assumes that the people in the original position exhibit a mutually disinterested rationality, which comes to this:

The persons in the original position try to acknowledge principles which advance their scheme of ends as far as possible. They do this by attempting to win for themselves the highest index of primary social goods, since this enables them to promote their conception of the good most effectively whatever it turns out to be. The parties do not seek to confer benefits or to impose injuries on one another; they are not moved

by affection or rancour. Nor do they try to gain relative to each other, they are not envious or vain (Rawls 1972: 144).

This characteristic of mutually disinterested rationality combines with the veil of ignorance to facilitate the development of the principles of justice as fairness (Rawls 1972: 183). According to Rawls, the most rational stance for a person in the original position to aim for is for principles of justice that guarantee that if she/he turns out to be in the lowest class of society, she/he will get the best deal possible, in other words the best condition in which she/he may find herself/himself when the veil of ignorance is lifted.

Fourthly, according to Rawls, two quite distinct principles of justice develop in relation to the two categories of primary social goods. The first category of primary social goods is allocated according to a principle of justice. The second is the principle of greatest equal liberty, which insists that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a system of liberty for all. This argument put forward by Rawls, according to Miller (2002: 3), relies upon a model of democratic decision-making that has come to be called 'deliberative democracy'.

A democratic system is deliberate to the extent that the decisions it reaches reflect open discussion among the participants, with people ready to listen to the views and consider the interests of others, and modify their own opinions accordingly. Miller (2002) believes that in a deliberative democracy, the final decision taken may not be wholly consensual, but it should represent a fair balance between the different views expressed in the course of the discussion, and to the extent that it does, even those who would prefer some other outcome can recognise the decision as legitimate (Miller 2002: 4). But, according to Goodin (1992: 133), there is no reason to believe that the better judgement will always be accepted, even under the best conditions of reasoning.

Finally, regardless of whether the policy outcome is more just or corrects past mistakes, theorists also argue that decisions emerging from an open and inclusive deliberative process should be considered more democratically legitimate than decisions emerging from an aggregative voting process (Elster 1998; Gutmann & Thompson 1996; Young 2000). In general, democratic decisions are considered more legitimate if there is agreement that all the relevant voices were equally heard. Thus deliberative theorists argue that deliberation, which is specifically attuned to principles of inclusion and equality, can achieve this result better than a voting process where many individuals do not vote and whose voices are therefore silent.

In support of this argument, deliberative democrats such as Dryzek and List (2002) are uniformly optimistic that deliberation yields rational collective outcomes. They are both supported by Freeman (2000: 377), who asserts that "integral to the idea of a deliberative democracy is then some idea of public reason". He maintains that:

For purposes of exploring the empirical implications of this theory, I assume that among the ultimate ends of citizens confirmed as a result of the deliberative process in a highest order sense of justice, a higher-order preference to cooperate on fair terms with others for reciprocal advantage, and this implies a regulative desire to conform the pursuit of one's good, as well as the demands one makes on others, to public principles of justice which all can reasonably be expected to accept (Freeman 2000: 377).

John Rawls believes that a theory is deliberative if the fair terms of social cooperation include the requirement that citizens or their representatives actually

seek to give one another mutually acceptable reasons to justify the laws they adopt.

Rawls' principles could be of benefit for school governance because his consensual form of democratic participation through reasoning and persuasion could help members of school governance to participate to the best of their ability in organisations such as schools. For example, characterisation such as free reasoning among equals can in turn serve as a model for arrangements of collective decision-making that is to establish a framework of free reasoning among school governance stakeholders.

Using this model in schools, stakeholders can work out the content of the deliberative democratic ideal and its conception of public reasoning by considering features of such reasoning in the idealised case and then aiming to build those features into institutions such as schools. Furthermore, creating a deliberating decision-making body which includes all stakeholders could defuse some controversy about the hard choices that could be made by participants. However, deliberative democratic participation is not immune to criticism.

2.3.6 Criticisms of deliberative democracy

Those who do not see eye to eye with deliberative democrats assert that all the potential benefits discussed above – greater tolerance, public spiritedness, an expanded set of policy solutions, more just outcomes, greater legitimisation – rest on an assumption that deliberation (in contrast to a voting process) allows participants to reveal their 'true' preferences. As suggested above, underlying such views is a belief that public-spirited discussions are more likely to lead to outcomes reflecting the public's interests. This is similar to what a political theorist Hanna Pitkin (1971) says about a public-spirited way of talking:

It forces us to transform 'I want' into 'I am entitled to', a claim that becomes negotiable by public standards. In the process of making such claims, we learn to think about the standards themselves, about our stake in the existence of standards, of justice, of our community, even of our opponents and enemies in the community, so that afterwards, we are changed (Pitkin 1971: 347).

According to Pitkin, this is an important assumption for deliberative democracy. According to Miller (2000: 10) deliberative democracy is more vulnerable to exploitation in the sense that the practice of deliberative democracy can be abused by people who pay lip service to the ideal of open discussion but actually attempt to manipulate their colleagues to reach a consensus that serves private interests. She further asserts that in the deliberative conception, the aim is to reach agreement, which might be achieved in different ways. One way is for participants to agree on a substantive norm, which all concur in thinking is the appropriate norm for the case in hand. Another way is to agree on a procedure, which abstracts from the merits of arguments advanced by particular claimants.

In either case, the outcome is a decision which all the parties involved may feel is reasonable, but this does not imply that it reflects any transcendent standard of justice or rightness (Miller 2000: 11). According to Miller the emphasis in the deliberative conception is on the way in which a process of open discussion in which all points of view can be heard may legitimate the outcome when this is seen to reflect the discussion that has preceded it, not on deliberation as a discovery procedure in search of a correct answer.

Another central criticism of deliberative democracy has to do with concerns about inequality and power. While theorists assert that equality is a basic tenet of deliberation (i.e. all participants should be treated equally), little is said about how equality is attained in deliberative processes. Simon (1999) points out (as

have many others, notably Barach, Lukes, Gaventa, and Handler) that power differentials are pervasive in real world politics and often serve to distort the subordinated group's sense of its interests and capacities.

There is also a concern that through the process of discussion, participants find out about each other's preferences, and weaker people may acquiesce to the stronger (Gargarella 1998). Thus, due, in part, to acquiescence on the part of individuals representing marginalised groups, as well as to the norms for public discussion, deliberation actually promotes conformism, rather than unearthing important 'real' differences in opinion, and a false consensus emerges (Przeworski 1998). According to them, it is clearly a problem if marginalised groups self-censor their true views about a social problem for fear that such a revelation would result in further marginalisation and/or discrimination.

Another prevalent criticism is the apparent disagreement between Habermas and Foucault, which is confirmed especially in their views on language. Whereas Habermas believes that communicative action aspires to the truth and can secure mutual understanding in public institutions, governed by reason, Foucault has a more pessimistic view of language as proposed by Habermas. Foucault expresses grave doubts as to whether language is the adequate expression of all realities.

Furthermore, it is maintained that while Young provides an eloquent and persuasive description of this central problem with contemporary deliberative theories, her solutions for overcoming the inclination to privilege unity, specifically to the real world, are not sustainable. She argues that participants should not put their differences aside to invoke a common goal, but rather different social segments in society should struggle through discussion by engaging with one another across their differences. However, as mentioned above, to know whether deliberation is a useful mechanism for dealing with deep

disagreement, we must assess whether participants to a deliberative process are willing to struggle or whether they avoid issues that require struggle.

Even for the structure of school governance, such critics could affect the day-to-day running of the school in the sense that discussions could be more vulnerable to exploitation, hence the practice of deliberation could be abused by members who pay lip service to the ideal of open discussion but actually attempt to manipulate others to reach a consensus that serves their own interests. Moreover, inequality and power among school governance members could easily prevent deliberation from taking place if one group of stakeholders does not want to treat others – for instance learners – as equal partners.

Furthermore, although the aim is to reach agreement, which might be achieved in different ways, some members could easily turn other members against each other. Expressing concerns about participation of learners in school governance is a good example of this potential problem for open and inclusive deliberation. Most deliberative theorists are concerned about the problems that arise in deliberation due to existing power differentials, and grapple with what structures should be set up to lessen such problems.

2.3.7 Relevance of theoretical ideas for South African school governance

Habermas's idea of communicative action could play a significant role in South African school governance. He suggests an attractive model of democratic process that emphasises a citizenry understanding of active participating that could also be applied by South African school governance members. Although one might hesitate to translate a model forged in the relatively homogeneous affluence of Germany to the realities of a South African society, Habermas's notion has an undoubted appeal. According to Johnson *et al.* (2001: 233), in seeking an adequate response to these challenges, Habermas turns to the

modern forms of institutions and resources that have their roots in European modernity: civil society, the public sphere and rational discourse. He expresses his faith in these as follows:

If actors from civil society then join together, formulating the relevant issue and promoting it in the public sphere, their efforts can be successful. Under conditions of a liberal public sphere, informal public communication accomplishes two things in cases in which mobilisation depends on crisis. On the one hand, it prevents the accumulation of indoctrinated masses that are seduced by populist leaders. On the other hand, it ... helps (the mobilised) public have a political influence on institutionalised opinion – and will formation (Habermas 1996: 382).

Habermas asserts that the full variety of catastrophes facing the postmodern world is best confronted by keeping faith with the institutions of modernity, and directing them appropriately. He follows Marx in recognising that “the relation between capitalism and democracy is fraught with tension, something liberal theories often deny” and continues that “the relation between the development of the democratic constitutional state and capitalist modernization is by no means linear” (Habermas 1996: 50).

In other words, the economic inequalities attendant on capitalism always threaten the gains of democratic equality. For Habermas, unless citizens inhabit the forms and institutions of constitutional democracy in a spirit of rational participation, the citizens become passive, and the forms and institutions are drained of all vitality. Translating the above view for the structure of school governance means that if members of the SGB could join together as equal partners for a better cause their efforts to promote peace could be successful.

Again, Habermas's discursive model of deliberative democracy can be applied in schools. Schools claim to be inclusive and purport to be democratic. Habermas ensures the quality and inclusiveness of democratic processes in the multiple spheres of social life and within public institutions. He and other theorists make a compelling argument for the need to deepen democracy (Miller 2000: 9). This, according to Miller, is because the deliberative ideal starts from the premise that political preferences will conflict and that the purpose of democratic institutions must be to resolve this conflict. This also means that if SGBs could resolve their differences, democratic participation would be achieved.

Another example that could be of much help to SGBs is offered by Miller (2000) who envisages an open and uncoerced discussion of the issue at stake with the aim of arriving at an agreed judgement. The process of reaching decision is a process whereby initial preferences are transformed to take account of the views of others' that is, the need to reach an agreement forces each participant to put forward proposals under the rubric of general principles that others could accept. Miller asserts that "by giving these reasons, however, I am committing myself to a general principle, which by implication applies to any other similarly placed group" (Miller 2000: 10).

Furthermore Miller believes that deliberation relies upon a person's capacity to be swayed by rational arguments and to lay aside particular interests and opinions in deference to overall fairness and the common interest of the collectivity. This could be a good tool that could be used by school governance members, as it encourages people to be to some degree communally oriented in their outlook. Miller also posits that democratic practice towards deliberative a ideal encourages stakeholders not merely to express their political opinions, but to form those opinions through debate in public settings. This idea is presently lacking in school governance.

Moreover, liberal theorists of democracy such as Habermas, Young and Benhabib require that people need to recognise all beings capable of speech and action to be participants in the conversation. Benhabib's features of deliberative participation, for example, could be best achieved in an inclusive school and if education for democracy could be embraced in schools. Most contemporary deliberative theorists call for the inclusion of individuals and or groups who will be affected by the policy decisions under consideration as an important and necessary requirement to achieve true democratic legitimacy. Grogan and Gusnamo (2001: 17) explain this further by maintaining that the ideals of deliberation, most notably the goals of reciprocity and reasonableness, where participants engage in public discussion not only to express their own view but also to listen and learn from others. In reality, deliberative democracy calls for a more inclusive and purposeful set of representatives to engage in discussions of public importance.

Aligning deliberative theories to this study, and more especially to school governance, the above views of mediation and dispute resolution methods could be adopted in order to try to help resolve the disputes in school governing bodies and to enable them to become more democratic and inclusive. For schools, such an adoption is important, since teachers and learners have to engage in deliberation and reflection to convince each other of what they have to say to each other when deliberating in their SGB meetings. This is because the discursive conception assumes that all persons are autonomous and can rationally articulate persuasive arguments through public deliberations in a participatory and democratic way.

These assumptions would be of significance if they were put into practice in the SGBs' day-to-day operations. I believe that consensus in schools could be achieved by adopting the notion of consensus through deliberation and reasoning. The consensual form of democratic participation through reasoning

and persuasion could help explain how SGB participation could be achieved in organisations such as schools. I therefore maintain that consensus in schools can be achieved by adopting the notion of consensus through deliberation and reasoning.

However, although a deliberative democratic theory is suggested as a tentative solution for school governance at this stage, it is also worth mentioning that this is not going to be an easy task to achieve. Various factors are going to derail the process even further because implementing changes in a system with deep historical divisions and low levels of capacity will inevitably be a slow process when compared to the relatively easy task of designing new policies. Furthermore, developing a culture of democratic participation has to be seen as an evolutionary process. Educators, principals, parents and school officials need time to develop the knowledge, skills and values necessary for learner leadership and distributed leadership to become a reality. This is the reason why in conjunction with deliberative democratic school governance I also put forward the idea of Black African cultural perspective with *ubuntu* as a starting point to be fused or used side by side with deliberative democratic participation in schools for the betterment of school governance.

2.4 Justification for black African cultural perspective

In the process of writing this chapter I established that the concepts of deliberative theories as expounded by western philosophers, such as rationality, inclusion and many others, could not always be seen as predictable, persuasive or as an alternative solution to Black African thinking. Culturally, we (black South Africans) differ from other tribes and nations and there is in some aspects a vast difference, more especially in our ability for solving problems. By African I am not referring to geographical boundaries nor including all racial groups leaving in Africa/South Africa, but, I am referring to black (colour of the skin) people

usually known as Bantu/Xhosa speakers, more especially those living in South Africa.

For black Africans the pursuit of the common good is the primary goal of the community and always takes precedence over the pursuit of individually chosen ends. This common good is conceived of as a good which fits the patterns of preferences of individual members, it is not a single good, but many goods, each fitting a sphere of social life and resting on a consensus (agreement) about the good life identified for application in specific social contexts (Main & Suransky: 1997) . The good life in the black African context for an individual is conceived of as coinciding with the good of the community, and a person's choice is highly or lowly ranked as it contributes to or detracts from the common good of that particular community. This is how we (including myself), are socialised and what we practice as our way of life.

Furthermore, whereas the value system endorses an individualist approach in which individuals are regarded as rights bearers and separated from all other beings, black African values reflect a more communitarian jurisprudential approach, in which individuals are seen in relationship to others. This argument is strengthened by Fedler & Okkers (2001: 102) who assert that the basic unit in Western culture is the nuclear family, in which the independence of individuals is stressed, whereas by contrast, the extended family with strong communal ties forms the basis of African culture.

Waghid and van Wyk (2005: 108) maintain that the slogan 'your child is mine, my child is yours' has a particularly African flavour to it as in many ways it epitomises the sense of community so prevalent in African society. In this sense the child is held to be the property of the community and it is the community members who will see that the individual child becomes a significant member of that particular community, an asset to all. Moreover, it is also believed that in an

African context, the history of a person's life is the story of his or her transactions with the community's material and moral worlds, which, in effect, is the story of his or her relations with particular sets of social goods.

In this sense goods acquire social meaning from actual patterns of distribution, and their meanings regulate social relations, which implies that the common life is a function of the distributive patterns and the social meanings of social goods and philosophers such as Schicle (1994) call this the social theses. This social thesis is a major assumption of the approach adopted in this study, i.e. the capacity for moral choice and development can only be exercised in a cultural setting which makes provision for its growth. According to the social thesis, an individual's choice of way of life is a choice constrained by the community's pursuit of shared ends which is very important in the black African context.

The above view, however, is how most *ubuntu* thinkers formulate their views in terms of "a person is a person through other persons" or "I am, because you are". In this way human dignity has a central position which is related to both morality and rationality. Accordingly *ubuntu* thinkers believe that there is no dualism because morality is acquired from community life. In this sense one talks of communitarian morality which could be achieved by adopting the view of 'collective consciousness' which involves universal brotherhood, sharing and treating other people with respect. The sharing aspect is very important for most other thinkers on *ubuntu*, as I have noted that sharing is also Mbiti's (1969) starting-point in developing his views on the philosophy of *ubuntu*.

2.4.1 The philosophy of *ubuntu*

Defining *ubuntu* is viewed as notoriously difficult as a plethora of definitions, each emphasising different elements of the concept, exist. According to Roux & Coetzee (1994: 135) many thinkers have attempted to define Ubuntu. Battle (1996: 99) asserts that the concept *ubuntu* originates from the Xhosa expression

‘Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu’ meaning that each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others and, in turn, individuality is truly expressed, or a person depends on other persons to be a person. However, for me, it is in State versus Makwanyane’s case (1995) that the meaning of *ubuntu* was explicitly contemplated. In this case Justice Langa posits that *ubuntu* is a culture which places some emphasis on communality and on the interdependence of the members of that community.

Khoza (in Roux & Coetzee 1994: 99) also describes *ubuntu* as an African view of life and world-view. He argues that the distinctive collective consciousness of Africans is manifested in their behaviour patterns, expressions and spiritual self-fulfilment in which values such as the universal brotherhood of Africans, sharing and treating other people as humans, are concretised. His basic idea of universal brotherhood is echoed by other African thinkers in ideas such as sensitivity for the needs and wants of others, the understanding of others’ frames of reference and man as a social being. This collective consciousness advocated by *ubuntu* thinkers involves notions such as universal brotherhood and sharing which for Mbigi means ‘participation’. From this view Mbigi (1997) develops a network of concepts such as ‘group solidarity’, ‘compassion’, ‘respect’, ‘dignity’, and ‘collective unity’ to convey his idea of *ubuntu*.

It is also believed that Mbigi bases his model on four principles which he derives from the *ubuntu* view of life: morality, which involves trust and credibility; interdependence, which concerns the sharing and caring aspect, i.e. co-operation and participation; spirit of man, which refers to human dignity and mutual respect, that is that activity should be person-driven and humanness should be central; and lastly totality, which pertains to continuous improvement of everything by every member. According to this perception, *ubuntu* involves a departure from hierarchical structure management relations and the introduction of co-operation and support in which the collective solidarity of the various

groups is respected and enhanced. For Mbigi, *ubuntu* is a social survival strategy, for it developed from adverse social and geographical circumstances in which people had to co-operate to survive, and as such it is part of Africans' 'collective consciousness'.

As a philosophy *ubuntu* has the central premise of connection where different beings are united as beings. According to Blankenberg (1999: 43) it is all about relationships in the same community as it is a link binding individuals and groups together, the ultimate meaning being not only unity in multiplicity, but the concentric and harmonic unity of the visible and invisible worlds. Furthermore, the philosophy of *ubuntu* espouses a fundamental respect of the rights of others, as well as deep allegiance to the collective identity. There is a strong emphasis on duties and virtues, but rights are always implied. More importantly, *ubuntu* regulates the exercise of rights by the emphasis it lays on sharing and co-responsibility and the mutual enjoyment of rights by all. It also helps with good human relationships and increasing human value, trust and dignity. The dominant theme of the culture is that the life of another person is at least as valuable as one's own.

Lastly, African societies place a high value on human worth, but it was humanism that found expression in a communal context rather than in individualism (Teffo 1998: 3). According to Mbiti (1969: 108) "whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual". This leads to social harmony and cohesion starting at the family and cultural community, and circling out to the global community (Le Roux 2000: 43). Through conceiving of the individual as being in the centre of this greater whole, the philosophy of *ubuntu* may perhaps be described as African humanism/humanity.

Before moving on to the principles of *ubuntu* which I am going to refer to them *right now*, I would like to point out that I do not intend dwelling on nor comparing *ubuntu* as a philosophy with other cultural groups. My intention is to select from the principles of *ubuntu* those principles I intend to incorporate and use in my argument for inclusive school governance. Discussion of the principle of humanity, which encapsulates moral norms such as respect, compassion and kindness, follows.

2.4.2 Humanity

Firstly, Letseka (2000: 179) identifies the notion of Botho or *ubuntu* (humanism) as pervasive and fundamental to African socio-ethical thought, as illuminating the communal rootedness and interdependence of persons, and highlighting the importance of human relationships, as an important measure of human well-being or human flourishing in traditional African life. Letseka treats Botho or *ubuntu* as normative in that it encapsulates moral norms and virtues such as kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, and respect and concerns for others (Letseka 2000: 180).

According to Letseka, a person has a duty to give the same respect, dignity, value and acceptance to each member of the community. Moreover, the person possessing *ubuntu* in a community has characteristics such as being caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, and virtuous and blessed, thus marking a shift from confrontation to conciliation. These characteristics are very much needed when people work together in the school governance for the good of the school.

Secondly, Ramose (2002: 231) argues that *ubuntu* can be understood as being human (humanness), hence, to be a human is not enough; one is enjoined, commanded as it were, to actually become a human being. Key concepts used to

describe *ubuntu* are forgiveness, recognition, humanness, humaneness, being respectful and being polite. Ramose believes that interdependence, collective consciousness and a communalist worldview are of utmost importance in an African way of life.

For Ramose, community ethos requires tolerance, understanding and respect towards all individuals in interpersonal relationships, in relations between the individual and the group of which he/she forms part, between groups, between such groups and larger communities of which they in turn are the component forces, between different communities, and so forth, to eventually encompass all ties of humanity. In this context, ubuntuism may thus be observed on its most basic level in individual interactions and in the operation of small groups (such as families) but such interaction reflects a view of humanity generally. This is closely related to communalism or communal aspects that I have referred to earlier in this chapter. The communal practice of black people is almost, but not all inclusively, similar.

Thirdly, *ubuntu* has been called African humanism because it emphasises the value of human dignity irrespective of a person's usefulness. It expresses the idea that a person's life is meaningful only if he or she lives in harmony with other people because an African person is an integral part of society. For Chikanda as mentioned by Roux and Coetzee (1994) *Ubuntu*, which she sees as African humanism, involves alms-giving, sympathy care, sensitivity to the needs of others, respect, consideration, patience and kindness. Developing human potential requires, according to Nono Makhundu in Roux and Coetzee (1994), traits such as warmth, empathy, reciprocity, harmony, co-operation and a shared world-view, which make up the *ubuntu* culture. Its spirit emphasises respect for human dignity, marking a shift from confrontation to conciliation. This is what I aspire to in the structure of school governance

Fourthly, humanity in this view is seen as a characteristic of the whole species as this idea is made up of different elements. African humankind constitutes one family. Thus I gain my humanity by entering into this relationship with other members of the family. This means that to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establishing human respect with them. It is therefore meaningful to state that to denigrate and disrespect other human beings is in the first place to denigrate and disrespect oneself if it is accepted that oneself is a subject worthy of dignity and respect. A person's (own) humanity is seen to be a gift. These are some of the values I grew up with as a black woman in my community.

Lastly, taking the above view into consideration, in a black African context this does not mean that humanity is not mine; neither does it mean that since I am part of the entire group I have no individual autonomy or value. It means that one's humanity is not something that can be acquired or developed by one's own isolated power. I can only exercise or fulfil my humanity as long as I remain in touch with others, for it is they who empower me. Humankind is seen in its relationship with others. The ideal person, according to the African worldview, is one who has the virtues of sharing and compassion. The individual has a social commitment to share his relationship with others, for instance, his record in terms of kindness and good character, generosity, hard work, discipline, honour and respect, and living in harmony (Teffo: 1998). The humanness referred to here finds expression in a communal context.

However, while the values that the word *ubuntu* encapsulate are not themselves unique to African thought, their significance for a society is arguably much more pronounced in African communities. It would seem to encompass primarily a notion of collectivity or communality, a notion which is linked intricately to those of group solidarity and interdependence. The interdependence of community members in turn leads to the recognition that individuals not only exercise their

rights communally, but also have certain duties towards the community as a whole as well as towards other individual members. According to Venter (2004: 156), *ubuntu* is a concrete manifestation of the interconnectedness of human beings and the embodiment of (South) African culture and life style.

2.4.3 South African perspective of *ubuntu*

Here in South Africa, *ubuntu* is seen as a notion with particular resonance in the building of democracy. According to Le Grange (in Waghid and van Wyk. 2005: 131) the term *ubuntu* has gained prominence in post-apartheid South Africa. Justice Mokgoro likens *ubuntu* to the English word 'humanity' and the Afrikaans word 'menswaardigheid', and argues that it embraces both section 9 (the right to life), and section 15 (the right to human dignity) of the South African Constitution's Bill of Rights, which was born out of a long struggle against colonial oppression and apartheid and out of the African spirit of *ubuntu*.

The Bill of Rights is part of the African Renaissance (the rebirth of African/South African values) which were suppressed or marginalised by colonial powers and institutions in the past. The Bill of Rights should therefore be seen as the attempt to give expression to the values associated with *ubuntu*. In *State versus Makwanyane*, J Sachs said that the concept of *ubuntu* should be invoked when the Bill of Rights is applied to restore dignity to ideas and values that have long been suppressed or marginalised.

In the 1990s, *ubuntu* received recognition from the Interim Constitution and in the postscript to the interim constitution, for example, *ubuntu* is explicitly mentioned as being the source of the underlying values of the new South Africa. It (*ubuntu*) is listed along with the constitution, human rights and a legacy of hatred. In this formulation, *ubuntu* is aligned with positive values of understanding and reparation, and contrasted with vengeance, retaliation, and

victimisation. The post-amble to the interim Constitution (1993) includes the following:

The adoption of this constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge. These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* not for victimization (in Johnson *et al.* 2001: 206).

From this view I hold that South Africa highlights the value of *ubuntu*, which relates to forgiveness, recognition, humanness etc. Justice Mokgoro refers to *ubuntu* as one shared value that runs like a golden thread across cultural lines and then proceeds to the following definition:

Generally, *ubuntu* translates as humaneness. In its most fundamental sense it translates as personhood and morality. Metaphorically, it expresses itself in 'Umntu ngumntu ngabantu' (a person is a person because of other people), describing the significance of group solidarity on survival issues so central to survival of communities. While it envelops the key values of group solidarity, compassion, respect, human dignity, conformity to the basic norms and collective unity, in its fundamental sense it denotes humanity and morality (S. v Makwanyane 1995: 308).

The source of indigenous values to which the passage is referring is the concept of *ubuntu*. In part, its prominence might be understood as an attempt to (re)discover African cultural values eroded by both colonialism and apartheid. It is part of our 'rainbow heritage', though it might have operated and still operates

differently in diverse community settings because South Africa is a multi-ethnic society as well as a multicultural one.

Another perspective on *ubuntu* is provided by Sebidi (1998), who warns that for South Africans the collective values of *ubuntu* cannot be compromised. For him, *ubuntu* is more than just an attribute of individual human acts that build the community. He believes that it is a basic humanistic orientation towards one's fellow human being. According to him one of Brenda Fassies's ditties 'Umntu Ngumntu Ngabantu' (a person is a person through other persons), has helped to popularise what forms the very kernel of *ubuntu* as this basic orientation (Sebidi 1998: 63).

What Sebidi is saying is that one's humanity, one's personhood, is dependent upon one's relationship with others. Therefore *ubuntu*, however inchoate in terms of strict philosophical formulation, certainly rejects the rugged individualism that seems to be encouraged by some philosophical systems and ideological persuasions (*ibid.*). However, although I am putting forward the concept of *ubuntu* it does not mean that I am blinded by it and as a result that I believe it has no shortcomings. Criticisms have been put forward by scholars who argue against its characteristics.

2.4.4 Critical comments

The first strongest general objection to the claims about 'Umntu ngumntu ngabantu' is the view that human nature is created by the exercise of individual choice (Roux & Coetzee 1994). Critics of *ubuntu* believe that a human being is nothing but the life he leads, and each of us can lead any life that we choose to lead. Accordingly, human beings are what they make of themselves. Roux & Coetzee also believe that each one of us, naturally, has to make choices for him or herself. And from the choices that we make springs our character, our

attitudes, our way of life, and we find that we are nothing but what we choose to be and to think.

A second (closely related) objection concerns the importance of self-determination, in a way that minimises the shared nature of human life. It is argued by Ramose (2002b) that as adults we need to be self-determining, especially in the important areas of our lives. Even where such independence seems to give rise to anxiety and unhappiness it is claimed that this should be overcome rather than allowed to decrease the person's self-determination. To the extent that an adult's capacity for self-determination is underdeveloped, their judgements and actions are likely to be governed by unconscious motives and compensations, their projects are likely to be frustrated and their lives more likely to be empty or dominated by the judgements of others.

Thirdly, Nzimande and Mdluli (1987), in an article "*ubuntu*" – botho: Inkatha's 'People's Education', acknowledges that *ubuntu* has very positive connotations, and is understood as embracing values like "universal brotherhood for Africans", "sharing", "treating and respecting other people as human beings", Nzimande 1987: 64). However, they argue that *ubuntu* as a concept has been abused, as it has been treated as a transhistorical concept, whose meaning remains the same regardless of particular historical conjectures.

Furthermore, for Nzimande and Mdluli *ubuntu* has been reclaimed by the African bureaucratic petty bourgeoisie to legitimise its own hegemony in the political struggle (Nzimande & Mdluli 1987: 64). In particular, Nzimande & Mdluli (1987: 65) argue that certain conservative aspects of *ubuntu* have been elevated to suit some political ambitions. The result, they conclude is an authoritarian version of *ubuntu* that runs "counter to mass participatory democracy" (Nzimande & Mdluli 1987: 68). The challenge for Nzimande and Mdluli is to try and salvage the democratic values that are also implicit in *ubuntu*.

However, despite the critics' arguments, South Africa is expected to balance local (community), national, and international interests in its journey to become both a healthy nation which caters for the needs of its citizens, a regional leader, and a player on the world stage (Blankenberg 1999: 44). Planners of education must be loyal not only to the development needs of the economy, the nation – state and society in general - but also – and above all – to the development of the wholeness of the human being, to the spiritual and mental health and unity of both the individual and humanity (Vilakazi 2000: 208). *Ubuntu*, therefore, is an important concept for harmonious co-existence and sustainable development in a multicultural society such as South Africa. My emphasis is that it is very much needed for the reconstruction and development of society and its institutions.

In the words of Dlomo quoted by Sindane (in Venter 2004: 152) “the greatest strength of *Ubuntu* is that it is indigenous, a purely African philosophy of life” Viljoen (1998: 10) mentions that *ubuntu*, like existentialism, is a people-centred philosophy of life, an acknowledgement of the human status of another person: “You and I are members of one and the same race, namely, the human race”. The essence of man (meaning a man as a person not a man as a biological being) lies in the recognition of man as man, before financial, political and social factors are taken into consideration. Man/woman is an end in himself and not a means (Teffo 1998: 4).

The thrust of the above view is thus *ubuntu*/botho/menslikheid/humanness is a way of life that positively contributes to the sustenance of the well-being of its people. It is a philosophy that promotes the common good of society. This philosophy is transcultural and, if embraced, would enable South Africans to succeed in their quest for reconciliation and nation building (Teffo 1998: 5). With the indivisibility of individual and communal dignity as a starting point, South African human rights discourse and jurisprudence in general may successfully

move to a uniquely African conception of justice that serves the needs of the broader school community while simultaneously respecting the entitlements of the individual.

Finally, I conclude this section by saying that now that South Africa and other African countries are independent there is a need to re-incorporate their indigenous heritage which includes unique forms of democratic practices. It is also true that, while looking at South Africa in comparison to other African countries, black South Africans still combine traditional tribal practices with modern western forms of democracy, for example, although our national institutions are based on the Liberal democratic model, procedures have drawn on traditional practices. Also, many conflicts, disputes and situations where considerable violence threatens to undermine the transitional order, are addressed through more indigenous methods of mediation and dispute resolution, more especially in black schools.

From this view I now move on to a democratic vision of school governance for South African schools that incorporates the philosophy of *ubuntu* as its cornerstone based on the Africanisation of education debate.

2.5 Implications for democratic school governance

According to Mkabela and Luthuli (1997: 4) philosophy of life and philosophy of education go together, because a philosophy of life helps to identify the goals and purposes that a particular society holds dear. Education discourse within this African frame of reference would help African people and schools to function in relation to one another in their communal tradition. This collective effort, in turn, would be characterised by a spirit of *ubuntu* which sees human needs, interests and dignity as of fundamental importance and concern.

For educational endeavour and for members of school governance this would mean that traditional educational thought and practice would be directed towards fostering humane people endowed with moral norms and virtues such as kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy, respect and concern for others (Higgs & Smith: 2002). Here in South Africa, and in schools in general, the African spirit of *ubuntu* should be regarded as one of the origins of developing human rights culture. These considerations together constitute the basis for my submission, that *ubuntu* is the foundation of the African way of life among the bantu/African-speaking peoples. *Ubuntu* takes seriously the view of man as basically a social being.

Elza Venter (2004: 149) is also of the opinion that the notion of *ubuntu* and communalism is of great importance in an African educational discourse, as well as in an African philosophy of education. She believes that *ubuntu* is a philosophy that promotes the common good of society and includes humaneness as an essential element of human growth. She is supported by Letseka (2000) who is of the contention that notwithstanding the diversities in cultures in Africa, humanism is a pervasive and fundamental aspect of African culture and socio-ethical thought, and educators could concentrate on ideas such as these in the multicultural classrooms, because they transcend the said diversities.

In the context of a school, it is vital to have an "open moral atmosphere"¹⁵ in which tolerance is practised by each and every member of school governance and different moral perspectives and principles are welcomed. A school with a "closed moral atmosphere"¹⁶ would probably have a single dominant moral authority or viewpoint, which is imposed on educators and learners in an

¹⁵ An open moral atmosphere is where different values are encouraged, there is a general commitment to being an ethical school, and ethical evaluations are made based on sound reasons.

¹⁶ A closed moral atmosphere is where one set of values is imposed on everyone.

authoritarian manner. The other alternative, of course, is a school with an “amoral atmosphere”¹⁷, where educators and learners act with no regard for morality. Having raised these values, however, I think there is something worthwhile that could be done to make the idea of democratic participation in schools a reality. This, I believe, could be achieved if both educators and learners could tolerate each other in order for schools to sustain a system of democracy based on value systems.

2.5.1 Tolerance

Tolerance is a value to be achieved by deepening SGB stakeholder understanding of the origins, evolution and achievements of humanity on the one hand and through the exploration of that which is common and diverse in cultural heritage on the other. Disagreements need not cause harm if there is tolerance and respect for the other’s viewpoint in the SGB structure. Tolerance is the idea that one must not disregard other people’s points of view, even about important moral issues. In addition, the value of tolerance has become even more important now that we live side by side with people who are very different from us. Much of this conflict, although not all of it, could be solved by an appreciation of the value of tolerance, the belief that the right thing to do is to take other people’s opinions, religions and cultures into account, and not to judge them (South African Council of Educators: 2002).

Tolerance further depends on the principle that everyone has the right to follow the path they believe to be the correct one. A very real threat to freedom comes from the fact that people have a habit of rejecting that which is unfamiliar. If a society/school society is not tolerant then there cannot be true freedom. When I point out the importance of tolerance, I do not mean to suggest that it is the only value that school governance stakeholders should live by, or even that it is

¹⁷ An amoral atmosphere is where there is no concern or regard for morality.

the most important one. However, when making moral evaluations as professional educators it is important that these evaluations evolve in a continuing discussion and debate between educators, and between educators and other role-players in education, such as learners. Another important characteristic important for the foundation of the SGB structure is that of respecting each other.

2.5.2 Respect

In the great contest of ideas that best symbolises enlightened humanity, respect, in addition to intelligence and tolerance, is probably the essential quality, more especially for people working together for a common cause such as in school governance. As a value, 'respect' is not explicitly defined in the constitution but it is implicit in the way the Bill of Rights governs not just the state's relationship with citizens but citizens' relationships with each other. How can I respect you if you do not respect me? Respect is an essential precondition for communication, for teamwork and for productivity, and this could be a good tool to be used in schools.

Schools cannot function if there is no mutual respect between educators, learners and parents. On the same principles, learning cannot happen if there is no mutual respect between educators and learners. In some of the most important international declarations that South Africa has ratified and which are therefore legally binding on our country, South Africans have committed themselves to the values of respect and responsibility. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also states that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. School governance therefore must also direct itself to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sex, and friendship

among all peoples, ethnic nationalities, religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter argues that for democratic participation to take place conditions for full and free development of all members of school governance should be promoted and this must be done for all SGB stakeholders. The basic conception is that each school governance individual is to be treated equally, and with due regard to his/her actual personal preferences. The principles in question are those of equality, democracy and liberty so important in 'philosophical' justifications of liberal democratic participation. It is believed that such principles may in turn be based on fundamental theoretical or philosophical analyses of the nature of man and reality and of schools in particular.

In essence, liberal theorists provided a version of justifications of liberal democracy in terms of equality and liberty. The contention here is that equality is implied by the notion of a decision by the people. They see democratic participation as necessary to give an equal say to all individuals, and the provision of an equal say is, in turn, necessary to give an equal say to all individuals. Moreover, the provision of an equal say is, in turn, seen as necessary to give proper recognition to the basic equality of all men and women, deriving from an essential quality they all have beneath their undeniable differences.

Furthermore, the chapter recommends that deliberative democratic theories could be ideal for the success of school governance. This is due to the fact that a democratic system in school governance procedures could be viewed as deliberate to the extent that the decisions that could be reached reflect open discussion among the participants, with people ready to listen to the views and consider the interests of others, and modify their own opinions accordingly. This

view is supported by many theorists who believe that, in a deliberative democracy, the final decision taken may not be wholly consensual, but it should represent a fair balance between the different views expressed in the course of the discussion, and to the extent that it does, even those who would prefer some other outcome can recognise the decision as legitimate.

Deliberative theorists also argue that decisions emerging from an open and inclusive deliberative process should be considered to be more democratically legitimate than decisions emerging from an aggregative voting process. In general, democratic decisions are considered to be more legitimate if there is agreement that all the relevant voices were equally heard. Thus, deliberative theorists argue that deliberation, which is specifically attuned to principles of inclusion and equality, can achieve this result better than a voting process where many individuals do not vote and whose voices are therefore silent.

Deliberation instead of voting used to be practised in traditional African decision-making structures. A typical form from the Southern African context is the Sotho/Kgotla, Xhosa/Nguni imbizos and many other forms of decision-making structures long practised by black Africans. In such structures decision-making used to be and still is based on a consensual model, an indigenous form of democracy. The main characteristics of these deliberations are a lengthy testing of opinions, but differences would generally be aired with reserve (Nurnberger in Nurnberger 1991: 307).

These pre-colonial black African societies are reported to have had a kind of participatory democracy. Ashton (1967: 216) states that discussion according to contemporary observers is keen, allows freedom of speech and attaches great weight to the opinion and attitude of people. Further explanation of this phenomenon is explained by Mandela in the remaining chapters of this study.

However, it is of importance to explain that I will not dwell much on this aspect in the focus of this study.

Most contemporary deliberative theorists call for the inclusion of individuals and or groups who will be affected by the policy decisions under consideration as an important and necessary requirement to achieve true democratic legitimacy. In reality, deliberative democracy calls for a more inclusive and purposeful set of representatives to engage in discussions of public importance. However, it is also pointed out those deliberative processes would be more effective if they are fused with African culture. It is suggested that in African culture, learners are used to working in groups and not as individuals and that this should be taken into account within the school, the classroom teaching and once more in school governance.

One of the enduring ways in which traditional African societies instil desirable attitudes, dispositions and habits in their youngsters is through storytelling. A great deal of philosophical material is embedded in proverbs, myths and folktales, folksongs, rituals, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the people. Letseka (2000: 189) maintains that learners should learn to tell their own stories, as well as to listen to others' stories. In addition to the African philosophers, Iris Marion Young is one of the deliberative democrats who favour narratives or storytelling. She is of the opinion that narrative can create opportunities for the marginalised to tell their individual stories, and this point will be elaborated further in the interpretive chapter which follows. The interpretive methods that follow in the next chapter will enhance the philosophical methods utilised in this study.

CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM: NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative enters organisation studies in at least four forms: organisational research that is written in a story-like fashion (tales from the field); organisational research that collects organisational stories (tales of the field); organisational research that conceptualises organisational life as story making and organisation theory as story reading (interpretative approaches); and a disciplinary reflection that takes the form of literary critique (Czarniawska 1998: 13).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the interpretive paradigm which aims to guide this thesis. Interpretivism is based upon general characteristics such as understanding and interpretation of daily occurrences and social structures as well as the meanings people give to the phenomena. Besides, a narrative inquiry is an interpretive, qualitative method of research. It intends to inform practice as well as to clarify criteria which are appropriate for assessing the merit of the narrative research approach based upon the interpretive model.

The narrative research approach method I employed aimed at uncovering the process followed when doing this study. The idea behind the use of narratives is to help reveal or discover the untold story/stories of educators and learners, or part of what is actually taking place in the structure of school governance, and to retell it for the sake of democratic participation and inclusive unity.

Furthermore, data are constructed through three methods, namely questionnaires, focus group interviews and journal entries. The value of choosing

such tools for this particular inquiry was not that they brought me closer to more plausible perspectives of school governance, but that I felt that there was a need to elicit as much data as possible using a questionnaire to initially break the ice and enter into the principal's world of storytelling. The focus group interviews with educators which followed became the most appropriate method to capture the synthesis of their perceptions and the tone of its language became the tool for analysing experiences.

Journal entries of learners followed for further depth. A journal is a record of thoughts, deeds and hopes and it is a playground into which each learner can step and play alone. Their voices helped me to understand more clearly their life world in school governance because in the process I allowed the data to speak for itself. A greater detailed explanation as to why I prefer these tools is explained later in the next sections of this chapter. Before moving on to the reason for using a narrative form of inquiry for this study, I would like to highlight the fact that, in this chapter, the words 'story' and 'narrative' have been used interchangeably from time to time. Finally, validity and reliability of findings is highlighted.

It is, however, important to highlight as early as the beginning of this chapter that parents and non-teaching staff are not considered as participants in this study. The five schools that I used all do not have non-teaching staff who are members of the SGB structure (see appendix 1 for guidelines for inclusion of non-teaching staff). The reasons for schools for not including them are beyond the scope of this study. However, a table for selection of SGB stakeholders is included in the chapter (also see appendix 2). Secondly, I agree that parents are valuable members of SGBs, however, I was greatly influenced by the pilot study I conducted earlier, where I did not get anything that warranted my going back to them in this main study. The critical focus of my study is the inclusion of learners as decision-makers as stipulated by the RCL Guides.

I also felt that adding parents to the sample would result in overloading of the research given the variety and numerous reasons and arguments from other sectoral groups in the SGB, namely parents and educators, against the inclusion of learners in the SGB, as evidenced by the pilot study. Secondly, findings from the pilot study revealed that the sectorial representatives who were mostly aggrieved by the inclusion of learners were the educators and not the parents.

In the process of conducting this research I considered it as imperative to focus on sampling educators and learners who on a day-to-day basis are in the same environment and who also interact because of facets of learning and teaching other than that of school governance. The idea was to focus on these two groups of stakeholders. Finally, one person's study generates other research debates and this area is already considered as a field of study by another educator, in one of the schools I used for data collection for this study.

I now discuss the underlying assumptions of the interpretive paradigm.

3.2 Underlying assumptions and beliefs about interpretivism

An interpretivist holds that reality is constructed. According to Cantrell (1993: 84) researchers from this orientation seek to understand phenomena and to interpret meaning within the social and cultural context of the natural setting. "In fact, an inquiry is not a matter of offering interpretations of reality, but one of offering interpretations that become reality, to the extent they are agreed upon" (Smith 1989: 171). In reality, the interpretivist seeks subjective perceptions of individuals.

Carr and Kemmis (1983: 88) emphasise that to identify the actor's "motives and intentions correctly is to grasp the 'subjective meaning' the action has for the

actor". In support of this idea, Fetterman (1988) indicates that researchers from the phenomenological perspective "argue that what people believe to be true is more important than any objective reality: people act on what they believe. Moreover, there are real consequences to their actions" (Fetterman 1988: 18). The idea is supported by Campbell (n.d.) who maintains that with the development of positivist approaches phenomenology has been adopted by different disciplines as an appropriate way of exploring research questions, which lead to a different way of knowledge being constructed. A phenomenological approach which is an interpretive strategy has been used for the data analysis of educators towards the end of this chapter.

In order to uncover what people believe and to render meaning about their actions and intentions, interpretive researchers interact dialogically with the participants. Within this interrelationship, values cannot be sidestepped. They accept the inseparable bond between values and facts and attempt to understand reality, especially the behaviour of people, within a social context. Moreover, events are understood through the mental process of interpretation which is influenced by and interacts with social context mutual simultaneous shaping independent, interrelated, dialogic dualism (Cantrell: 1993). In order to have this kind of knowledge as demanded by the interpretive paradigm, narratives should be solicited and constructed through human interaction.

One would recall that this study is philosophical, and as such, would wonder how philosophical research ends up adopting an interpretive paradigm. Interpretive research is usually qualitative. Cantrell (1993) posits that the term 'qualitative research' is used synonymously for a number of research approaches associated with the interpretive and critical science perspectives. These include, for example, naturalistic, ethnographic, ethno methodological, case study, humanistic, ecological, action research,

participatory, feminist, and emancipatory (Jacob, 1987, 1988; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Peshkin, 1988; Smith, 1987).

In this way, qualitative research is no more monolithic than quantitative research. Neither one reflects a single point or even a narrow perspective on the continuum but a range of possibilities tightly bound to the paradigm and the purpose of the inquiry. To make this point more clearly, this is a philosophical case study of five schools in the Mthatha district. As a philosophical case study, its focus is emancipatory as it seeks to emancipate by means of conscience raising of all school governance stakeholders including learners. In general, interpretivism and critical science have many tenets in common, with one marked difference. The former focuses primarily on understanding and interpretation and the latter on emancipation and critique of ideologies.

In summary, interpretive explanation entails pursuing an understanding. It facilitates the discovery of meanings of an event, or practice, or the occurrence of a phenomenon. Given that the social world is complex, the power of interpretive explanation can help in the development of an acceptable reason for a given occurrence. In this case, meanings, which are articulated into the production of reason, emanate from the participants and the context.

I now move on to the use of narratives as an instance of interpretivism.

3.3 Narrative Inquiry

Young argues for narrative and situated knowledge (Young 2000: 70). In arguing for narratives, she aims to integrate persons with different voices, since it recognises that all persons have a voice and are different, and that they have a right to participation in public life. She posits that some internal exclusion occurs because participants in a political public do not have sufficiently shared

understandings to fashion a set of arguments with shared premises, or to appeal to shared experiences and values. Furthermore, she believes that too often in such situations the assumptions, experiences, and values of some members of the polity dominate the discourse, and those of others are misunderstood, devalued, or reconstructed to fit the dominant paradigms.

Young believes that arguments alone will do little to allow a public voice for those excluded from the discourse. It is for this reason that she introduces narrative or storytelling, which enhances the possibility of understanding the contending viewpoints of different people, albeit in terms of values, experience, culture, language and ethnicity. She is of the opinion that narrative can create opportunities for the marginalised to tell their individual stories. She further argues that narrative serves important functions in democratic communication, to foster understanding among members of a polity with very different experience or assumptions about what is important (Young 2000: 71).

To strengthen her case, she points out that in recent years a number of legal theories have turned to narrative as a means of giving voice to kinds of experience which often go unheard in legal discussions and courtroom settings, and as a means of challenging the idea that law expresses an impartial and neutral standpoint above all particular perspectives. For Young, some legal theorists discuss the way that storytelling in the legal context functions to challenge a hegemonic view and express the particularity to which the law ought to respond (Young 2000: 71). Furthermore, she asserts that some resistance movement leaders in Central and South America narrate their life stories as a means of exposing to the wider literate world the oppression of their people and the expression they suffer from their governments.

For her, such *testimonios* involve one person's story standing or speaking for that of a whole group to a wider, sometimes global, public, and making claims

upon that public for the group. Furthermore, she believes that as people tell such stories publicly within and between groups, discursive reflection on them develops a normative language that names their injustice and can give a general account of why this kind of suffering constitutes an injustice. She then argues that if one wants to make arguments to justify proposals for how to solve their collective problems or resolve their conflicts justly, they should engage in meaningful political discussion and debate and must share many things. She puts it like this:

We share a description of the problem; share an idiom in which to express alternative proposals, share rules of evidence and prediction, and share some normative principles which can serve as premises in our arguments about what ought to be done. When all these conditions exist, then we can engage in reasonable disagreement (Young 2000: 72).

For Young, when these conditions for meaningful arguments do not obtain, or when people lack shared understandings in crucial respects, sometimes forms of communication other than argument can speak across their differences to promote understanding. She takes the use of narrative in political communication to be one such mode. She argues that political narrative differs from other forms of narrative by its intent and its audience context. By this she means that “I tell the story not primarily to entertain or reveal myself, but to make a point – to demonstrate, describe, explain or justify something to others in an ongoing political discussion” (Young 2000: 72).

Young also believes that political narrative furthers discussion across difference in several ways. In her response to the difference principle, she believes that radical injustice can occur when those who suffer a wrongful harm or oppression lack the terms to express a claim of injustice within the prevailing normative discourse. For her, those who suffer this wrong are excluded from the polity, at

least with respect to that wrong. She calls this situation the *differend* (Young 2000: 72). In a *differend* principle, Young ponders the question as to how a group that suffers a particular harm or oppression can move from a situation of total silencing and exclusion with respect to this suffering to its public expression. In her attempts to answer this question she suggests that storytelling is often an important bridge in such cases between the mute experience of being wronged and political arguments about justice. She believes that those who experience the wrong, and perhaps some others who sense it, may have no language for expressing the suffering as an injustice, but nevertheless they can tell stories that relate a sense of wrong.

She posits that storytelling is often an important means by which members of collectives identify one another, and identify the basis of their affinity (Young 2000: 73). For her, the narrative exchanges give reflective voice to situated experiences and help affinity groupings give an account of their own individual identities in relation to their social positioning and their affinities with others. She further asserts that people in local publics often use narrative as a means of politicising their situation, by reflecting on the extent to which they experience similar problems and what political remedy they might propose for themselves. According to Young, examples of such local publics' emerging reflective stories include the processes of 'consciousness-raising' where problems are not yet recognised.

The idea of consciousness-raising as posited by Young is supported by Paulo Freire's *Conscientizacao* (conscientisation), a Portuguese word meaning 'consciousness-raising' that implies a process by which the person advances towards critical consciousness. Freire's (1972) main concern lies with social transformation of both the oppressor and the oppressed by educating both of them through critical self-reflecting 'consciousness'. For Freire, it is the unique

attribute of human consciousness and the existence of self-consciousness that enables people to change their situations.

According to Freire, until people involved realise their capacity to make the world, they are de-humanised. Once they have become conscious of this capacity, the possibility of humanisation is opened up. Furthermore Young believes that this is often the only vehicle for understanding the particular experiences of those in particular social situations, because experiences are not shared by those who are situated differently, but which they must understand in order to do justice.

In her endeavour to justify this assertion, Young asks people to imagine people who move in wheelchairs who make claims upon city resources to remove wrongful impediments to their social, political, and economic participation, and positively to aid them in ways they claim will equalise their ability to participate. For Young a primary way to make their case will be through telling stories of their physical, temporal, social, and emotional obstacles. She believes such testimony will provide an answer to people who doubt the legitimacy of or the claim to this need or right.

Moreover, according to Young (2000) relating stories alone will not legitimate such claims, as political communication requires general normative arguments. She further argues that stories often serve as the only means for people in one social segment to gain understanding of the experience, needs, projects, problems, and pleasures of people in the society differently situated from themselves, and to the description of which general normative principles must be applied to do justice (Young 2000: 74).

Young (2000) also believes that while it sometimes happens that people know they are ignorant about the lives of others in the polity, perhaps more often

people come to a situation of political discussion with a stock of empty generalities, false assumptions, or incomplete and biased pictures of the needs, aspirations, and histories of others with whom or about whom they communicate. Moreover, she points out that such pre-understandings often depend on stereotypes or an overly narrow focus on a particular aspect of the lives of the people. For her, narratives often help target and correct such pre-understandings.

Young (2000: 76) also puts forward the idea of aid in constituting the social knowledge that enlarges thought. According to her, narrative not only exhibits experience and values from the point of view of the subjects that have and hold them, but also reveals a total social knowledge from particular points of view. According to Young, stories not only relate the experiences of the protagonists, but also present a particular interpretation of their relationships with others.

She believes that each person and collective not only has an account of their own position, actions and values which appear to others from the stories they tell, but they also exhibit the situated knowledge available from different perspectives, producing a collective social wisdom not available from any other position. She also believes that, by means of narratives expressed in public with others differently situated who also tell their stories, speakers and listeners can develop the 'enlarged thought' that transforms their thinking about issues from being narrowly self-interested or self-regarding about an issue, to thinking about an issue in a way that takes account of the perspectives of others.

Young (2000: 76) further maintains that narrative contributes to political argument by the social knowledge it offers of what the likely effects of policies and actions are on people in different social locations. For her, stories of public harassment or abusive treatment coming from people who are relating to others with a different experience are crucial to the process that brought about citizen

demand. She believes that the general normative functions of narrative in political communication refer to teaching and learning (Young 2000: 77). By this she means that inclusive democratic communication assumes that all participants have something to teach the public about the society in which they dwell together and its problems. Furthermore, it assumes as well that all participants are ignorant of some aspects of the social or natural world and that everyone comes to a political conflict with some biases, prejudices, blind spots, or stereotypes.

According to Young, frequently in situations of political disagreement, one faction assumes that they know what it is like for others, or that they can put themselves in the place of the others, or that they are really just like the others. Especially in mass society, where knowledge of others may have little understanding of lived need or interest across groups, she further assumes that a norm of political communication under these conditions is that everyone should aim to enlarge their social understanding by learning about the specific experience and meanings attending other social locations and thus narratives make this easier and sometimes an adventure. On this point Young has this to say:

I have argued that an inclusive conception of democracy requires an account of how modes of communication additional to making assertions and giving reasons can contribute to political discussion that aims to solve collective problems justly (Young 2000: 77).

In this situation Young regards greeting, rhetoric, and narrative as three important additional modes of communication that can and sometimes also do operate to enlarge the scope of discussion and its participants, and also transform their ways of seeing problems and possible solutions in more subtle ways that take needs and perspectives more into account (Young 2000: 77). She

therefore argues for an inclusive theory, and the practice of communicative democracy, that should not only privilege specific ways of making claims and arguments, but also include participants in this communicative democracy who should listen to all modes of expression and aim to co-operate and reach a solution to collective problems (Young 2000: 80).

Relating what Young and Freire are saying to this study, I would argue that until such time that learners and educators become conscious of their position and try to change their situation, school governance will not be transformed. A tentative solution that could be used by school governance stakeholders is to allow learners to use stories to argue their standpoints as they are not eloquent in speech. Stories could serve as the only means for them (learners) to gain understanding of the experiences, needs, problems, and pleasures of other stakeholders as well.

As suggested by Young, by means of narratives, speakers and listeners can develop the 'enlarged thought' that transforms their thinking about issues from being narrowly self-interested or self-regarding about an issue being discussed by school governance stakeholders. An idea of 'enlarged thought' is what is required by all members of governance. At this point I need to highlight the fact that although theorists such as Young argue for the use of narratives as a form of inquiry there are also challenges facing this form of inquiry which need to be discussed.

3.3.1 The rationale for a narrative approach

Firstly, narrative¹⁹ inquiry is an interpretive, qualitative method of research. A further view on this is given by Czarniawska (1998), who asserts that qualitative research using narrative methods enables researchers to place themselves at the interface between persons, stories, and organisations, and to place the person in an emotional and organisational context. He further argues that most work in narratives concerns 'personal narratives' or stories,²⁰ some of which bridge the person and the social life. In addition to this, Boje (1998) believes that humans as storytelling animals act toward their organisations and environments based upon their storied interpretations of self, other, organisation, and environment.

Roberts (2001: 5) concurs with the above theorists and argues that human reality is a world of 'story-objects' or events, by which he means human-generated sequences of occurrences that constitute a unity or narrative identity. He cites Lemon who believes that narratives not only explain but also explicate meaningful overall entities, existent narrative entities or identities, which are discovered and articulated by people.

According to Roberts, the story-objects that constitute the human world are far from being distinct or easily identifiable or even definable, but an important clue to both their existence and significance is the awareness and capabilities that individuals show in comprehending the events (Roberts 2001: 5). Such a view is

¹⁹ Narrative is an account of a connected sequence of actions, events and circumstances. Such accounts may contain varying amounts of description, analysis and explanation. There are numerous alternative definitions of narrative, most of which convey a point of view on the functioning and effects of narrative (Roberts 2001: 436).

²⁰ 'Story' is most often used as a synonym for narrative. But story is sometimes used to refer to actual sequences of human happenings, as opposed to narratives, which are tales told about those stories. Another point of view is that narrative conveys a stronger sense of the existence of the narrator of a story and of the audience to whom the story is told (Roberts 2001: 436).

supported by Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, 1999), a moral philosopher who also claims that social life is best conceived of as an enacted narrative. Bruner (1990, 1999) points out that storytelling are part of how humans translate their individual private experience of understanding into a public culturally negotiated form.

Secondly, narratives use an interpretive approach. Mwanje (2001: 2) believes that an interpretive approach is the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct settings, in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds. This means that an interpretive approach is a vital source of information for understanding people. Interpretive theory gives the reader a feel for another's social reality in the context of the postulate of adequacy; hence, interpretive research does not try to be value free.

Another view of narratives is given by Bruner (1990: 44) who points out that the strength of the narrative lies in its indifference to extra-linguistic reality. He asserts that in narrative inquiry, the perceived coherence of the sequence (temporal order) of events rather than the truth or falsity of story elements, determines the plot and thus the power of the narrative as a story. His argument is supported by Connelly and Clandinnin (1990) who accentuate the process of storytelling as the never-ending construction of meaning in organisations.

Thirdly, Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 16) posit that narrative inquiry can be of two types: descriptive and explanatory. By and large, these two forms of inquiry use the same kinds of narrative data, collected by means such as interviews and document analysis. According to them, in descriptive narrative accounts, individuals or groups use narrative to make sequences of events in their lives or organisations meaningful; and in explanatory narrative, the interest is in accounting for the connection between events in a causal sense and providing

the necessary narrative accounts that supply the connections. Furthermore, they believe that narrative inquiries are always composed around a particular wonder, a research puzzle (Clandinin & Connelly 2000: 124).

This, according to the above theorists, is called the research problem or research question. Moreover, they believe that problems carry with them qualities of clear definability and the expectation of solutions, but narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of a search, a 're-search', a searching again. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also believe that narrative inquiry carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution. For them, the question the narrative inquirers should ask is what is narrative inquiry about? Or what is the experience of interest to a narrative inquirer?

Lastly, Clandinin and Connelly argued that stories are symbolic expressions of the inner experience of development in children. They believe that stories connect children to psychological realities and folk tales assist children in their psychosocial and imaginative growth. According to them, when traditional texts are told to children, the symbolic pattern these tales display become manifestations of psychological constructs. In this type of practice the method evolves as data are collected and examined, and meanings are negotiated. Emergent theories are then brought back to the field and are used to modify concepts and protocols, and to investigative practice.

In conclusion, relating what the above theorists say to this study, my intention is to try to explore democratic participation in schools. By so doing, I am trying to understand how learners' participation is being constructed and shaped by their experiences of participating as members in school governance by other stakeholders, and narratives seem perfect for elucidating responses from participants. Thus this study has utilised such a process. Stories and questions,

as well as analytical perspectives, are reworked and reinterpreted – dependent on feedback from both educators and learners.

In addition to this, due to the interactive and grounded nature of the examination, the sample population was intentionally small (five schools) so that respondents could be examined in depth and over time. The goal was to obtain the most holistic information possible from a sample population so as to include participants in the exploration and development of the study, and narratives have helped me achieve that goal. This raises the following important question: why narratives for this particular chapter? The answer to this question can best be explored by looking at the importance of narratives as put forward by theorists such as Roberts, Clandinin and Connelly, Young, and Freire.

3.3.2 Theoretical understanding of narratives

Roberts (2001) relates narratives to a cognitive instrument, a means of seeing and understanding things together, in unity. He argues that the cognitive function of narrative form is not just to relate a succession of events but also to body forth an ensemble of interrelationships of many different kinds as a single whole (Roberts 2001: 9). He further argues that the central point is that by narratives we mean much more than simply a list of disconnected facts set forth in chronological order: in some sense, those facts have to constitute a 'story' (Roberts 2001: 41). He further maintains that following a story is, at one level, a matter of understanding words, sentences, paragraphs, set out in order. But at a much more important level, the following of a story is a means of understanding the successive actions and thoughts and feelings of certain described characters with a peculiar directness, and being pulled forward by this development almost against people's will (Roberts, 2001: 41).

The idea of unity as perceived by Roberts is taken further by Clandinin & Connelly (2000) who introduced Alasdair MacIntyre's work (1981) and the notion

of narrative unity into people's thinking (Clandinin & Connelly 2000: 3). According to these theorists, narrative unity gives people a way to think in a more detailed and informative way about the general construct of continuity in individuals' lives. These theorists also believe that continuity became for people a narrative construction that opened up a floodgate of ideas and possibilities. Furthermore, they maintain that social sciences are concerned with humans and their relations with themselves and their environment. As such, the social sciences are founded on the study of experience; hence, experience for these theorists is the starting point and the key term for all social science inquiry. They put it as follows:

Narrative became a way of understanding experience. Our excitement and interest in narrative has its origins in our interest in experience. With narrative as our vantage point, we have a point of reference, a life and a ground to stand on for imagining what experience is and for imagining how it might be studied and represented in researchers' texts. In this view, experience is how people live stories and in telling of these stories, reaffirms them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young who are new to their communities (Clandinin & Connelly 2000: XX11).

In the above quote, Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 20) point out that narrative inquiry is the best way of representing a way of understanding experience as it is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places. Moreover, they maintain that an inquirer enters this matrix in its midst and progresses in the same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling the stories of the experiences that make up people's lives, both individual and social. This means that in narrative thinking, the person in context is of prime interest. These theorists further explain narrative as follows:

Narrative inquiry has the compelling, sometimes confounding, equality of merging overall life experiences with specific research experience, realms of experience often separated in inquiry. It is almost a maxim in many forms of research to bind the phenomena and maintain distance from them. Narrative inquiry always has purpose, though purpose may shift, and always has focus, though focus may blur and move. Narrative inquiry boundaries expand and contract. Researchers', personal, private, and professional lives cross the boundaries into the research site; likewise, though often not with the same intensity, participants' lives flow the other way (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000: 115).

The above quote is supported by theorists such as Czarniawska (1998: 3) who believes that narratives, stories and tales connect the person and the personal to social events, processes and organisations. In this view he is supported by (Schultz, 1973) who argues that it is impossible to understand human conduct by ignoring its intentions, and it is impossible to understand human intentions by ignoring the settings in which they make sense. Furthermore, Schultz asserts that such settings may be institutions, sets of practices, or some other contexts created by humans and nonhumans – contexts that have a history, that have been organised as narratives themselves. This is what narrative form uniquely represents, and why researchers require it as an irreducible form of understanding.

I conclude by relating the relevance of using narratives to this study on school governance and then move on to discuss Iris Marion Young (2000), who is among the researchers who argue for making a case for narratives.

In relation to school governance, I need to highlight the fact that storytelling is part of African communities, therefore learners in schools need to be shown that

connection of social events and the school by being afforded opportunities to narrate their personal experiences in the structure of school governance. Narrative inquiry always has a purpose that is why in structures such as school governance desirable attitudes, dispositions and habits in youngsters should be instilled through storytelling. This is also what I aim to do later in this chapter by giving a voice to the voiceless through storytelling using journal entries. Narratives will be used as a way of understanding experiences in school governance in the same way as suggested by theorists such as Young.

3.3.3 Challenges and counter-challenges facing narrative inquiry

Roberts (2001: 215) asserts that the conceptual problem about narrative is to make explicit the criteria by which people recognise narrative as coherent or incoherent. He points out that, until recently, the concept of narrative form seemed straightforward and unproblematic but, in recent years, the concept of narrative has been increasingly subjected to sophisticated analysis, and with less than satisfactory results (Roberts 2001: 214). He posits that “beyond the question of uncertainty and validity of narrative form lies the question of the accuracy, adequacy and appositeness of the stories” (Roberts 2001: 17). Roberts in this assertion is further supported by Czarniawska (1998: 5) who believes that although it is clear that narrative offers an alternative mode of knowing, the relative advantage of using this mode may remain uncertain.

Roberts further argues that there is, for example, the problem of explicating how a narrative structure determines what is or what is not relevant to it. Such a problem he believes has no analogue in the explication of the structure of theories. Furthermore, he maintains that people ordinarily recognise, and in certain clear cases with no uncertainty at all, whether in the recounting of a coherent narrative, a specific incident or detail is relevant or irrelevant to that narrative (Roberts 2001: 214). To make this point clearer, Roberts cites the following example “If I am telling the story of an encounter and its outcome that

took place last Wednesday, I might become preoccupied with the incidental fact that it occurred on Wednesday and begin to add other details of what otherwise happened to me on Wednesday, for no better reason than that" (Roberts 2001: 215). He puts it as follows:

Since we do recognize that a given incident is relevant or irrelevant to a certain narrative, it would seem that we must be in possession of implicit criteria of relevance. Moreover, just as logic makes explicit the criteria of valid inference, we are implicit in the unreflective recognition of arguments in ordinary discourse as good or bad, so it would seem that we should be able to make explicit in a systematic way the criteria implicit in our recognition of relevance and irrelevance (Roberts 2001: 215).

Young (2000: 78) concurs with the above argument and maintains that narratives sometimes manipulate irrational assent, for example, stories may be false, misleading, or self-deceiving. She also asserts that, often in politics, people wrongly generalise from stories and they can create stereotypes as well as challenge them. She then warns the public against the dangers of manipulation and deceit as forms of communication in narratives as she believes that they sometimes can be superficial, insincere, or strategically manipulated to win the assent of others simply by flattery or fantasy and not by reason (Young 2000: 77). In support of the above argument, Young posits that a public discussion often involves irrational appeals or manipulation of unconscious desires and fears.

According to her, audiences in some situations are often dazzled by the excitement and sparkle of a presentation and distracted from its substance or lack thereof (Young 2000: 78). Such an idea is further supported by researchers such as Boje (1998) who acknowledge the fact that story-making is the collective process of social interaction in which story-meanings change over time. Boje

(1998) further asserts that stories can oppress and marginalise others. By this he means that story-meaning changes with the context of the telling as storytellers select, transform and reform the meanings of stories in light of the context of the storytelling. It is at this point that I must point out that Roberts and Young also put forward counter arguments against the problems of narratives. These two theorists, although vocal on problems surrounding narratives, are again the ones who put forward ways in which narrative scepticism could be avoided. Roberts, for example, argues that, between these extremes, narrative is the form in which people make comprehensible the many successive interrelationships that are comprised by a career (Roberts 2001: 214).

Roberts, for example, believes that how people understand a story has never seemed a problem as such. He then points out that, although kinds of stories vary widely and significantly from culture to culture, storytelling is the most ubiquitous of human activities and in any culture it is the earliest form of complex discourse²¹ that is accessible to children and by which they are largely acculturated. Roberts (2001) further argues that, even though narrative form may be, for most people, associated with fairy tales, myths, and entertainments, it remains true that narrative is a primary cognitive instrument – an instrument rivalled, in fact, only by theory and by metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible. Hence, narrative form as it is exhibited in both history and fiction is particularly important as a rival to theoretical explanation or understanding.

²¹ Discourse is the way something is talked about. The discourse of narrative history, for example, has a language and mode of discussion that is actionist, individualist, interpretive, empiricist and, of course, narrativist (Roberts 2001: 436). Narrativist is a term variously applied to a diverse group of theorists – analytical philosophers, phenomenologists, pragmatists and postmodernists – who agree that the study of history is and/or should be primarily narrative in orientation (Roberts *ibid.*).

According to Roberts, writers of imaginative fiction know well the problems of constructing a coherent narrative account, with or without the constraint of arguing from evidence, but even so, they may not recognise the extent to which narrative as such is not just a technical problem for writers and critics but a primary and irreducible form of human comprehension, an article in the constitution of common sense. He believes that common sense at whatever age has presuppositions, which derive not from universal human experience but from a shared conceptual framework, which determines what shall count as experience for its communicants (Roberts 2001: 211).

Roberts is supported by Young (2000: 79) who argue that narratives are sometimes important parts of larger arguments, and sometimes enable understanding across difference in the absence of shared premises that arguments need in order to begin. In such situations Young suggests that the only remedy for false or invalid arguments is criticism. She argues that listeners to greetings, rhetoric and narrative should be critically vigilant and should apply standards of evaluation to them as well as to argument. She then appeals to the public to ask questions such as, is this discourse respectful, publicly assertable, and does it stand up to public challenge? Young believes that the only cure for false, manipulative or inappropriate talk is more talk that exposes or corrects it, whether as a string of reasons, a mode of recognition, or a way of making points or a narrative.

However, the most important thing to remember at this stage is that storytelling is a linguistic activity that is educative because it allows individuals to share their personal understanding with others, thereby creating negotiated transactions as argued at the opening stage of this chapter. Furthermore, it must be remembered that without this interactive narrative experience, humans could not express their knowledge or thought. Modern storytellers therefore, like their ancient counterparts, should continue to rely on manipulation of language in

order to relate an anecdote and should often make use of dramatic skills such as characterisation, narration and vocalisation of a respondent's experiences and feelings.

It is also true that stories can oppress and marginalise others and stakeholders such as educators can use narratives to manipulate others e.g. learners. Because of their experience and eloquence they can easily change or transform the story meaning to their own favour. As suggested by the above theorists, school governance stakeholders need to criticise one another in public and more talk or deliberation that corrects the misconception is encouraged. The question then is: what must narrative inquirers do in order to minimise narrative problems? The answer to this question lies, in a general sense, in the questions of meaning, significance, and purpose during the stage of inquiry. I now move on to explain the research process of inquiry used for the collection of data.

3.4 The research process

Permission to conduct this research was obtained from the district manager and from principals of schools. A letter requesting permission to conduct research in schools in the Mthatha district was personally handed to the district manager. That gave me an opportunity to explain the research procedure. However, a similar procedure was followed to obtain consent from principals to conduct research in their schools. All participants were informed objectively and honestly about the purpose, nature and importance of the research, and their freedom to refuse participation and of any possibility of psychological discomfort. According to Maruyama and Deno (1992) informed participant consent is crucial when conducting research, not only for ethical reasons, but also because it increases participation as people are more willing to support and participate in a research they understand and see as important.

Five schools were selected. Initially, ten schools were to be used. These ten schools were schools that were identified after the pilot study data were analysed. These were the schools I intended to make a follow up study with. However, Ngcwanguba Senior Secondary School (SSS), Mqanduli Village SSS, Gengqe SSS, Mancam SSS and Cunningham SSS with the permission of the district manager were selected. These are all pseudonyms. The use of pseudonyms became necessary for the schools and the participants because of the sensitive nature of the comments made. Cunningham SSS was selected from former model C schools, and Mancam was a coloured school and the rest were all black schools. In the next chapter (data analysis) the schools were further referred to as school A, B C D and E so as to further hide their real identity.

Before the study was conducted, an assurance was again solicited from the principals of schools that the identity of the schools and the principals would remain concealed and that a copy of the interview transcript for focus group interviews and journal transcripts would be made available to each school for scrutiny before and after the interviews. This was done in accordance with the guidelines governing ethics and the education law where it is suggested that the portrayal of persons in forms that subject them to the possibility of recognition should be avoided (Mouton & Babbie: 1998). I started with principals' questionnaires. They were given their questionnaires and were hand delivered and collected personally by myself. There were hundred percent response returns of the questionnaires.

3.4.1 Choice of research instruments

Cantrell (1993: 91) posits that instruments are tied to the purpose of the study and the structure of the design. She further asserts that the primary instrument for qualitative methods is the inquirer himself or herself. For Lincoln and Guba (1985), the human instrument is the instrument of choice, regardless of any imperfections, because its adaptability best meets the research requirements tied

to the interpretive paradigm. However, the human instrument may use other instruments to collect qualitative data such as a list of interview questions, and observational checklist or a traditional paper-pencil instrument and many others (Cantrell 1993: 91).

In support of the view, Miles and Huberman (1984: 42-3), pose the following questions in regard to design decisions concerning instrumentation. They believe that focus should be on the development of an instrument (before or during data collection) and on the degree of structure. For example, (a) does the researcher want to avoid blinders or pursue specific data? (b) emphasise context or be able to generalise to some degree? (c) not miss important information or reduce extraneous data? To serve the purpose of this study well, data construction was done through three methods of inquiry, that is, questionnaires for the principals, focus group conversations for the educators and journal entries for the learners. When choosing these three I followed Cantrell (1993) and Miles and Hubermans' suggestions on why, how and when to choose research instrumentation.

3.4.2 Method of inquiry: Principals' questionnaire

Consistent with the aim of this study, the focus of attention was on the perceptions of principals, educators and learners towards their participation in decision-making in the governance of schools, and the capacity of learners themselves to participate in the school governance structure. The technique employed for the principals was the use of questionnaires with both structured and unstructured open-ended questions.

Although single response questions were preferred for their easy processing, unstructured questions were included to allow respondents to justify some of their responses and to allow them more freedom to articulate their feelings. The fact that structured questions restrict and frustrate respondents when listed

options do not include certain individual responses persuaded me to include unstructured questions when designing the questionnaire. Another reason that compelled me to include structured questions was that responses tend to be shallow as these questions do not allow for free expression by the respondent (see appendix 3 principals' questionnaires).

The questionnaires were administered to the principals of the schools so as to fit in with their busy schedules. A covering letter, explaining the nature and purpose of the research, was handed to the principals together with the questionnaires. A date was guaranteed upon with each principal on when the questionnaires would be collected. Repeat visits were made to schools where questionnaires were not completed and ready for collection on the agreed dates. A justified sequence was followed. The questionnaire begins with general and non-threatening items (multiple-choice questions) followed by more in-depth questions. It was ensured that the questionnaire was long enough to get the required data but at the same time as short as possible to retain the necessary respondent interest for the completion of the questionnaire. Questions were asked in such a way that they could not be answered without much thinking.

The questionnaire was preferred over individual (one to one) interview techniques for the principals because of the following reasons (as stated by Forcese and Richer (1973) and Cohen and Manion (1994) (a) it is the most efficient instrument, (b) the anonymity ensured by the questionnaire makes it very likely that the responses given by the respondents represent their genuine feelings, especially, where the topic is sensitive (such as the one under investigation), (c) questionnaires provide uniformity across measurement situations as each individual responds to exactly the same questions, (d) possible errors by interviewers which may undermine validity of results, are avoided and (e) it is quicker, easier and cheaper to administer.

The conceptual framework (derived from focus group data on learner participation) informed the choice of questions that were posed in the questionnaires. Travers' (1978) advice was taken into consideration when designing the questionnaire. He maintains that the design of questionnaire questions determines the response rate, the reliability and validity of the instrument. He therefore advises that it is very important that the construction of questions is good and takes into consideration the choice of subjects to be studied, the size of the sample and the analysis of data. He also advises that one should weigh very carefully whether structured or unstructured questions should be used in the questionnaire (Travers: 1978).

The questions in the questionnaires were largely open-ended so as to allow the respondents the opportunity to raise issues that could be followed up in the subsequent interviews with educators. The questionnaire given to the principals was designed to obtain basic information about the school and the school governance structure. The aspects covered in the questionnaire were divided into sections, for example, in section A, they were only required to tick the correct responsive. Section B – E were open-ended questions.

Questions asked in section B focused on school governance, its composition, election criteria, and the number of school governance stakeholders. Section C focused on participation. The questions asked centred on the principles of participation. Section D focused specifically on the role of learners as stakeholders in school governance. The last section (E) was based on the training and empowerment of learners. After the analysis of the questionnaires, focus group interviews were conducted with educators. I purposefully decided to exclude principals from focus group interviews for fear of intimidating teachers by their presence during the sessions as the educators would not open up and be free with their responses.

I now move on to focus group interviews (FGDs).

3.4.3 Focus group conversation

According to Mwanje (2001: 26), after the in-depth interview, the focus group discussion (FDG) is the most used data collection technique in qualitative research. The application of FGD in a mixed methodology strategy such as in this study was a wise choice, especially as I was to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about the topic. Focus groups are generally regarded as a useful way of exploring attitudes on sensitive issues, or controversial topics. They can elicit contributions from interviewees who might otherwise be reluctant to contribute. Through their relatively informal interchanges, focus groups can lead to insights that might not otherwise have come to light through the one-to-one conventional interview.

Mwanje posits that FGDs capitalise on group dynamics, and allow a small group of respondents to be guided by a skilled researcher into increasing levels of focus and depth on the key issues of the research topic. I perceive myself as a highly skilled researcher more especially when it comes to FGDs. I was personally trained by Mwanje himself twice. The first time was in Cape Town in 2003 and in Ethiopia in 2005 during social science training workshops organised by the "Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa" (OSSREA) of which I am a member.

He (Mwanje) asserts that, FGD should be used for the following reasons: (a) Group Interaction: Interaction between respondents will generally stimulate richer responses and allow new and valuable thoughts to emerge (b) Observation. The researcher can observe the discussion and gain first hand insights into the respondents' behaviours, attitudes, language (including body language) and feelings (c) Cost and Timing. FGD can be completed more quickly and generally less expensively than a series of in-depth interviews.

During FGD sessions, a researcher is expected to consider several issues when using FGDs in research. However, the most important issue is the number of group members who participate in the interview sessions. Moreover, FGDs depend on the purpose of the research and the nature of data required. Six educators from each of the five schools were selected. I was never involved with their selection, the district manager and the principals decided on the number and on the group of people to be used. My role was to inform them that I was to conduct FGDs with educators. However, the number six was decided upon by the stakeholders, two educators who are members of SGBs, a deputy principal, two SMT members and a senior teacher participated in each school.

Three distinct and vital points about focus groups are that: (a) the sessions usually revolve around a prompt, a trigger, some stimulus introduced by the researcher in order to 'focus' the discussion (b) there is less emphasis on the need for the researcher to adopt a neutral role in the proceedings than is normally the case with other interview techniques (c) they place particular value on the interaction within the group as a means for eliciting information, rather than just collecting each individual's point of view there is a special value placed on the collective view, rather than the aggregate view.

3.4.4 Focus groups as field texts

Focus group interviews are described by Mishler (1986) as a widely used method of creating field texts, which may be turned into written field texts through a variety of means. According to him, while tapes can be transcribed, field notes can be made as one listens and re-listens to the tape recordings, or partial transcriptions can be made for segments of the taped interview, depending on the researcher's interests. In this study, a tape recorder was used to capture conversations, which were later transcribed as data.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 108) conversation is more often a way of composing a field text in face-to face encounters between pairs or among groups of individuals. Five focus group interviews with educators were conducted, one from each school. Before the study was conducted, considerable time was spent preparing interview techniques and creating a list of non-leading questions. In-depth, semi-structured interviews are generally regarded as appropriate tools with which to gain entry into the participants' lived world, and to make meaning of that world through dialogue (Seidman 1991).

General guidelines as suggested by Mwanje (2001b: 27) were followed during the FGD interview sessions. The following advice is given: (a) not to begin with difficult questions. Put these near the end so that if the respondents decide not to answer, you do not lose his/her willingness to answer, (b) not to make respondents feel they ought to know the answers. Help them by saying, "perhaps you have not had time to give this matter much thought?" Maybe they can find the answer later (c) respondents may not have the answer even though they would like to cooperate. Perhaps they just do not know, cannot remember, cannot express the answer well in words, have no strong opinion, or are unfamiliar with answering questions. Also they may even give answers that are unreliable or untruthful. (d) decide carefully whether you should avoid emotional or sensitive words.

Using words like 'greedy', 'oppressed' or 'immoral' may seem to imply a judgement. Such words can cause bias in the answers. Respondents may be reluctant or nervous to give answers. However, if you are looking for truthful answers, you may need to use such words. (e) avoid making assumptions. Do not ask questions like 'How many grades did you complete in primary school?' Perhaps the respondent had no opportunity to go to school (f) not to use confusing questions. Avoid asking questions like, 'would you prefer your child not to be vaccinated?' Keep it simple and positive. Ask, 'do you wish your child to

be vaccinated?’ (g) different ways of asking the same question. These may be needed by the interviewer in order to be able to adapt the questions to different respondents (h) use both direct and indirect questioning. For example, asking a parent about an older child’s health is not the same as asking the child about his/her own health and finally (i) the care with which you plan and design the questionnaire will influence the quality of the information you obtain.

The research interview was open-ended and conducted in an informal, non-directive manner so as to allow conversation to flow, as I tried to influence the subject as little as possible. Naturally, where I failed to understand a particular point made by the subject, I sought greater clarity. This style of interviewing allowed the respondent freedom to elaborate on responses in whatever manner she wished. As Markison and Gognalons-Caillard (cited in Kruger 1988) point out, the advantage of a semi-structured or non-directive interview is its flexibility, which allows the investigator to grasp more fully the subject’s experience than would be possible through the implementation of a more rigid methodological technique.

During the interview sessions, this is how I attempted to probe some answers from educators. I moved from a fairly specific opening question – “Please tell me what role you play in school governance?” – to non-leading and open-ended questions such as “Can you say more about that?” and “Does this feel complete to you?”. The aim was to let them tell their stories, in just the same way that they would tell a friend. My second direct question led from “How do you see yourself as a member of school governance?” to unplanned prompts such as “Is there anything else you’d like to add? Can you expand on that? Could you give me an example of that?”. These prompts were useful in encouraging open communication as well as insisting on remaining with the ‘concrete’, a vital ingredient of phenomenological interviewing (Valle & King 1978: 6).

I then proceeded with other questions with a view to entering their 'concrete' reality on their own terms, for example, "How do others view the participation of learners in school governance?" This was done so as to let the respondents open up a little further and for them to articulate different modes of experiences. The next question was "What idea of democratic participation works best for you?". This question was aimed at probing their perceptions of their experience. The intention was to let them think about various things that helped them to succeed or fail, if there were any such factors. The last question which was asked was an attempt to probe their own understanding of the phenomenon of 'democratic participation': "What are your thoughts on the future of learners and their role in the governance of their school?" The intention here was to allow them to reflect more objectively on the broader issue of participation of learners in school governance. From then on more questions followed and the focus was directed to learner participation.

The following excerpt is an example of conversations from the educators' research text that I captured during focus group interviews at one of the schools. It was later transcribed and the texts are discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Myself: Tell me Thandie, who elects the learner component of school governance in this school?

Thandie: The deputy principal and teacher liaison officer (TLO). This happen like this ... after election, their names are submitted to the educators and parents who sometimes do not accept some names of elected members whom they know as naughty and bullies.

Myself: If this is the case, how often do learners attend meetings? Or let me put it this way; are learners always present when decisions are taken?

Lizo: No, they attend when there is a need for them to do so. The problem sometimes is that, most meetings are held during teaching hours and this makes

it impossible for learners to attend these meetings. The TLO then act[s] on their behalf and narrate[s] to them (RCL) what was being discussed at the meeting. And what you must bear in mind is the fact that learners are not supposed to be present when matters such as employment of teachers and misconduct of teachers are discussed.

Myself: Can you pronounce to me that there is active exchange of ideas among all members including learners?

Hlehle: Yes, there is. (But, she could not proceed and another lady teacher continued to explain.) You know, parents are the ones who treat learners badly. They sometimes complain that learners are children and they do not need to know everything and sometimes parents feel that learners are learners and they should concentrate on their books.

Myself: If there are opposing views in the meeting what do you do as stakeholders?

Zola: That's where voting takes place.

The above conversation was captured using a tape recorder. It is believed by researchers that conversations and interviews are clearly two of the interactions during which a researcher may wish to use a tape recorder. It is possible, of course, to imagine a reconstruction of field notes or a reconstruction of daily events because it could be difficult to capture the interpersonal-exchange dynamics. In addition to this, the tape recorder frees the researcher to participate in the conversation. But the skill of asking the right kind of question is one which grows with experience and experimentation. Researchers such as Kruger (1988) maintain that:

rapport should exist between the researcher and the subjects. It is probably best to put questions to the subjects in tape-recorded interview sessions. Many researchers assert that the spoken interview allows the subjects to be as near as possible to their lived experience, does not

preclude the possibility of dialogue during this early phase of research and does not entail the inhibiting effect of the process of writing on spontaneity of expression (Kruger 1988: 151).

The above argument is supported by Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 109) who maintain that conversations are marked by equality among participants and by flexibility to allow participants to establish forms and topics appropriate to their group inquiry. Moreover, they also believe that conversation entails listening. For them, the listener's response may constitute a probe into experience that takes the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in a normal interview session.

At this point I would like to point out that the above statement does not mean there is no probing in normal interview sessions. Indeed, there is probing in conversation, in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other. The way an interviewer acts, questions, and responds in an interview shapes the relationship and the way participants respond and give accounts of their experience. Also, the conditions under which the interview takes place shape the interview, for example, the place, the time of day, and the degree of formality established should be taken into consideration. This does not mean, however, that focus group interviews are free from conflict.

Some researchers, among them Clandinin and Connelly (2000), note that research interviews normally have an inequality about them. They cite the fact that the direction of the interview, along with its specific questions, are governed by the interviewer, for example, researchers who establish intimate participatory relationships with participants find it difficult, if not impossible, to conduct such interviews with participants. They also point out that even when they begin with

the intention of conducting an interview, the interview often turns into a form of conversation, which can sometimes be difficult to control.

There is also the possibility that participants may control research interviews. They may ask to be interviewed on a particular topic, so they have an opportunity to give an account of themselves around that topic. However, whether the topic is chosen by participants or by the researcher, the kinds of questions asked and the ways they are structured provide a frame within which participants shape their accounts of their experience. For example, I contend that the topic selection determined by interviewer questions, one person talking at a time, the narrator taking the floor with referential language that keeps within the boundaries of selected topics, makes a difference to the content of field texts.

Relating focus group discussion to this study, in order to obtain experiences of learners in the structure of school governance focus group conversation was used. The advantage of using such a form of inquiry for this study was to collect more data from a variety of people within a short period of time. Gestures and facial expressions of educators were noticed and later revealed during data analysis. A very rich data captured by means of a tape recorder revealed a number of experiences and feelings which will be revealed later on in this chapter.

My last method of inquiry was with learners using journal entries as full texts.

3.4.5 Method of inquiry: Journal writing

During the process of designing learners' questions Travers' (1978) advice was taken into consideration. He maintains that the design of questions determines the response rate, the reliability and validity of the instrument. Moreover, he advises that it is very important that the construction of questions is good and

should take into consideration the choice of subject to be studied, the size of the sample and the analysis of data. Furthermore, he advises that one should weigh very carefully whether structured or unstructured questions should be used in the questionnaire.

During the design of the questionnaire unstructured questions were used. Unstructured questions were preferred as they are open-ended and allow the respondent freedom over how they wish to respond, and as a result they provided me with very rich data that would not have been gained by means of structured questions. Another reason why I included such questions was that they are useful if attitudes, perceptions and views of individuals are the purpose of the study.

The learner's questions attempted to elicit responses to the following concerns: (a) their perceptions of why and how they were elected to leadership positions in schools (b) their success in getting their points across in SGB meetings (c) the degree of seriousness parents and teachers accorded their contributions in SGB meetings (d) the amount of time they spend in participating in decision-making meetings (e) their perceptions of the SGB meetings – its value for them, their interest in the issues discussed, the form of the meetings and (d) their training needs for effectiveness in decision-making in SGB meetings, (see appendix 4 learner journal questionnaire).

I was never involved with the choice of RCL participants. The number and names were given to me. There was no consistency in the number of RCLs. One school (former model C) gave me four, two schools gave me two, and one school gave me three (i.e. the coloured school) and another school gave me one learner. The total number of RCL participants was twelve. I never bothered myself with the number of participants, as I knew the number of school governance members supposed to be selected (see table in chapter 1).

Moreover, in principle, there was nothing to stop schools from selecting RCL respondents on the basis of knowing. I knew for a fact that people tend to be chosen deliberately (a) because they have some special contribution to make, (b) because they have some unique insight or (c) because of the position they hold. I decided to arrange for the writing of journals during the long school break. Learners were given only one section to complete on each day. During the first day no journal entries were written, as I spent most of the time explaining reasons for conducting the study to them.

I was re-assured by the district manager, the principals and educators that consent was already solicited from the SGB members and parents for learners to participate in the study. However, during my working with them, (learners) a number of ethical issues were considered. When carrying out an empirical study, it is clear that, for the benefit of all stakeholders, those learners should not be forced to participate in a study. They should be able to participate on a voluntary basis and withdraw from the study if they no longer want to be part of it. Fortunately for me not a single learner withdrew.

I now move on to explain the importance of journal entries when one is conducting research.

3.4.6 Journals as field text

A journal is described by Mwanje (2001) as a record of thoughts, deeds and hopes usually written by a participant privately in his/her own time and at his/her own pace. According to Mwanje, the record and reflection upon one's life is almost an instinctual need. Because a journal is a playground into which one can step and play alone, I used it to allow learners to make a regular record of their role in school governance objectively, to look more closely at themselves and also to weigh their inner and outer situation so as to grow in 'consciousness' (Mwanje 2001).

The weeklong journal entry was necessitated by the fact that none of the learners had been interviewed in-depth and it was therefore imperative that they build internal rapport within themselves. Here, they accounted for activities that they perform in school governance, actions that they took and decisions that they made; a record of attitudes and perceptions that they conceive was encouraged in these reflective self-focused daily entries. These journal entries from learners helped me to develop documents to transcribe as field texts.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 132) describe field texts as not constructed with reflective intent, but rather, that they are close to experience, tend to be descriptive, and are shaped around particular events. Field texts have a recording quality to participants, whether auditory or visual, whereas research texts are at a distance from field texts and grow out of the repeated asking of questions concerning meaning and significance. Carr (1966) asserts that an inquirer composing a research text looks for the patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes either within or across an individual's experience in the social setting. Field texts are so compelling that researchers want to stop and let them speak for themselves. But as researchers we cannot stop there, for our inquiry task is to discover and construct meaning in those texts and they need to be reconstructed as research texts, and this brings me to the third set of considerations, that is, considerations of analysis and interpretation as I move from field texts to research texts.

The field texts are the texts of which one asks questions of meaning and social significance. Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 131) believe that before coming to the question of what to do with all the field texts, researchers need to know what it is that they need and try to make sure that they read and re-read all of the field texts and in some way sort them, so as to know what field texts they have. This involves careful coding of journal entries, field notes, documents, and

the rest, with notation of dates, contexts for the composition of the field texts, characters involved, perhaps topics dealt with, and so forth. But it is worth noting that the move from field texts to research texts is a difficult and complex transition.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 131) assert that although in some people's minds, narrative inquiry is merely a process of telling and writing down a story with perhaps some reflective comment by researchers and participants, the process of moving from field texts to research texts is far more complex. According to them, a narrative inquirer spends many hours reading and re-reading field texts in order to construct a chronicled or summarised account of what is contained within different sets of field texts.

Moreover, with narrative analytic terms in mind, narrative inquirers begin to appear in field texts: places where actions and events occurred, storylines that interweave and interconnect gaps or silences that become apparent, tensions that emerge, and continuities and discontinuities that appear, are all possible codes. However, as narrative researchers engage in this work, they begin to hold different field texts in relation to their field texts and the researcher who establishes intimate participant relations sometimes can become so confused about the relationship that the flow of documents that help contextualise the work goes unnoticed.

With regard to the use of journal entries for learners only, I was attempting to reduce some of the hierarchical and power relationships that are inherent in any relationship between adults (educators) and children (learners), and this investigation attempted to create a research setting that enabled learners to creatively express their thoughts and viewpoints in a safe, respectful, and arts-infused environment. It was also designed to give learners an opportunity for

expressing and exploring their own intuition and thinking by means of written accounts of experiences in the form of journal writings free from intimidation.

When designing questions for learners I had to ensure that the two basic requirements of a sound questionnaire as mentioned by Huysamen (1976) – reliability and validity – were met. According to Maruyama and Deno (1992) reliability refers to the accuracy and consistency of a measure in assessing whatever it measures, and Huysamen (1976) states that an instrument is reliable if it yields comparable measurements irrespective of who is applying it or when it is administered.

I now move on to an exploration of validity and reliability.

3.5 Assuring the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings

The issue of validity in qualitative research can be complicated. “Qualitative research often faces the criticism that it is unreliable invalid and generally unworthy of admission into the magic circle of science” (Robson 1993: 402). On the other hand, a realist holds that social phenomena do exist in the objective world and that lawful and reasonably stable relationships can be found among them.

Besides, Cantrell (1993: 100) maintains that, while researchers strive for results that others would consider rigorous and trustworthy, criteria for assessing these qualities for a non-experimental study differ from those of an experimental study. Furthermore, she posits that the phase is the most critical point at which consumers of research must wear the appropriate goggles—interpretive ones for interpretive studies, positive ones for positive studies. She is of the opinion that, wearing positive goggles to assess the rigor of an interpretive study leads to

inappropriate questions concerning, for example, sample size, generalisability, and objectivity (Cantrell: 1993).

She (Cantrell) makes examples of positivists. She maintains that positivists typically speak of validity, reliability and objectivity when assessing the worth of the study. Based upon the underlying assumptions of the paradigms, these concepts do not transfer directly to interpretive inquiry. According to her, some authors retain the terms of validity and reliability while proposing conceptually different means for judging merit. I am mentioning Cantrell's argument because my study is philosophical and I will require philosophical goggles when judging whether my findings are valid, reliable or trustworthy when reading this study – and here, judgement refers to offering defensible reasons for particular claims. This approach invariably makes my work reliable.

On the other hand, Mouton and Babbie (1998) affirm that social phenomena, such as language, decisions, conflicts, and hierarchies, exist objectively in the world and exert strong influence on human activities because people construct them. Therefore, social phenomena can be measured using a variety of instruments suitable for the research study. Finally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that qualitative research should undergo the tests of credibility (the parallel to internal validity), transferability (external validity or generalisability), dependability (reliability) and confirmability (construct validity) (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 294- 301).

I now examine issues of validation of this research work.

3.5.1 The question of validation

As far as the credibility of the present research process is concerned, there have been methods employed to realise this. Three forms of data collection methods have been used for attaining the credibility of my findings. The use of methods from different sources and of different methods of collecting data i.e. questionnaires, focus group interviews and journal entries was an attempt to enhance the credibility of the study. In other words, although my approach is credibly philosophical I also extended my methods to empirical techniques which could further enhance the validity of my arguments.

Validity is defined by Maruyama and Deno (1992) as the extent to which a measure actually measures what it is intended to measure. This means that a valid instrument is one which is able to accomplish the researcher's purpose and reflects the reliability with which a researcher can draw conclusions. In this study, questionnaires were used and their validity was tested by means of a random probe. A random probe occurs when a set of closed questions is randomly followed by an open-ended question where a respondent might be asked to justify his previous choice of an answer. The aim of the random probe was to overcome the closed questions' inability to really tap respondents' true feelings (see appendix 3, i.e. questionnaire).

A key strength of a case study is its use of a triangulation, which involves the method of using multiple sources for collecting data. Triangulation involves cross-checking data and interpretations by drawing upon different data sources, methods and perspectives. The rationale for using multiple sources of data is based on the ideas of replication and convergence (Robson 1993). I have systematically used multiple sources when collecting data with the aim of achieving results through in-depth description, as well as analysing and answering the research question(s). This experience demonstrated the thickness

of the description of the problem being studied and consistency in the interpretation of the data collected.

Furthermore, my involvement with the schools and respondents spanned about six to eight months. I started by piloting the study and then conducting the actual research – all empirical techniques to find evidence to substantiate my philosophical arguments. During the period I stayed at the schools I was able to “learn the culture” test for misinformation and build trust. This was a recipe for arriving at credible responses from the participants. The question is: how do you know if a participant is telling the truth? This is a crucial question facing researchers who use the interview data. Some checks and balances were used. It is believed that the researcher can have greater confidence in the interview data, knowing that some effort has been made to ensure the validity of the data. Where possible, the researcher should go back to the interviewee with the transcript to check with that person that it is an accurate statement.

After the transcription of interviews and journal entries was completed, the respondents were allowed to read through them and confirm the content before analysis. This proved immensely useful in establishing credibility and finally, cross referencing from responses made in the questionnaires during the course of focus group interviews for clarity and explanation became a cornerstone of the interviewing and this helped me to arrive at more credible findings.

Besides, while it is not desirable to generalise the findings of this study because of its sample size, the provision of a data base that makes transferability judgements possible by future appliers is of immeasurable significance (Robson 1993: 405). This research has attempted to carry much detail in the form of narrative to enable the reader to appreciate its findings. Also, given the direction in which many secondary schools are moving, as far as school governance is concerned, it is likely that this study will be of interest to them.

What I basically required from my data analyses is sufficient evidence to develop my argument that there exists an apparent lack of legitimate learner participation in some schools' SGBs. And in order to develop this argument I used empirical techniques to construct data that would substantiate my claims. Later on I would again philosophically argue how the apparent lack of learner participation can be resolved. In the main, although some evidence exists about the lack of democratic learner participation, I ventured to investigate whether this is so in five schools. Yet, my primary argument is to come up with a plausible philosophical justification as to how a lack of learner participation can be credibly resolved.

To determine the extent of the transferability of the case, I have detailed the theoretical framework (chapter two) on which this study is based. According to Yin (1983), this helps the reader to see how this research ties into a body of theory and helps those designing studies or making policy within that framework to determine whether or not this case can be transferred to other settings. This study is without doubt related to the theoretical framework – that is, both interpretivism and criticality.

I conclude this section by reverting to Patton (1990) who argues that the issue of credibility centres on three interrelated elements: rigorous techniques and methods, the credibility of the researcher, and the philosophical beliefs in the interpretive paradigm and qualitative methods. He believes that all three are critical. He further asserts that as long as inappropriate goggles cloud the view, interpretive studies will not be seen as credible.

I now move on to a discussion of ethical issues.

3.6 Ethical considerations

When carrying out empirical studies, a number of ethical issues arise. The view is supported by Robson (1993: 471) who maintains that in all circumstances, investigators must consider the ethical implications and psychological consequences for the participants in their research. Here I intend outlining some possible ethical issues that are especially relevant or which involve human subjects.

The first question might be, is it ethically correct to withhold information from research participants as to the goal of an empirical study? According to Robson (1993) the withholding of information or the misleading of participants is unacceptable if the participants are typically likely to object or show unease once debriefed. Where this is in doubt, appropriate consultation must precede the investigation. I am confident that this study adhered to this, as no information was withheld from the beginning.

Nevertheless, this is not the case in some situations. Suppose that the goal of the study is to prove that a certain theory is correct. Then, it would not be scientifically correct to tell the participants what the goal is since this may bias the results. This is especially true if the researcher is also the proponent of the theory, since the participants may try to provide only data that support the theory. In these situations, it is advisable that researchers discuss the goals and experimental design and sometimes even preliminary results with the subjects at the conclusion of the study. In other cases, the goals of the empirical study may be safely disclosed to the participants, for instance when the study is an exploratory one.

Secondly, the question may be, is it possible to avoid conflicts with other commitments? If for example, one is using learners as participants, just as I used learners for this particular study, learners may have to choose among several different commitments. They need to attend several different classes, do homework and classwork and get ready for their tests. Thus, learners have to make decisions on how to allocate their time and effort. These decisions should be based on the learners' ability to make decisions rationally, and to allocate their time and effort to those activities that give them the highest return. In order to avoid conflict with learners, I planned the activities in such a way as to minimise possible conflicts with other activities, by working with them during their long break period.

Fourthly, it is wise to stimulate teamwork with the participants. Empirical studies often require that teams of participants be formed. This situation helps participants to work in groups and understand the advantages and disadvantages of teamwork. Teamwork often keeps the participants' attention at a good level. There are several reasons for this phenomenon. The participants may lose interest in the research work, or if they are learners may prefer to attend other projects. Furthermore, it is important to establish a more direct and closer channel of communication between the participants and the researcher. By monitoring the empirical study the researcher obtains much better feedback about what the participants have learned. This feedback helps the researcher to maintain teamwork. From the very onset, channels of communication between myself, the district manager and schools were strengthened.

The question that could be asked is: is it ethically correct to withhold information from participants as to how the data they provide will be used? The participants need to be informed about how the data will be used so that they can provide their informed consent to participate in the empirical study. However, a formal acknowledgement is probably hardly ever necessary, and it might actually be

counterproductive. A formal acknowledgement, e.g. a signed informed consent form, may make the processes unnecessarily bureaucratic and it may actually scare the subjects, who may believe that by signing they give the researcher permission to use the data against them. Specifically, it must be made clear to the participants that the data they provide will remain confidential and anonymous, i.e. the data cannot be used against them. However, I was not made to sign any form, but we had a verbal agreement that the complete study will be made available to the schools, on request.

Furthermore, in regard to the protection of participants, Robson (1993) believes that it is a primary responsibility of the researcher to protect participants from physical and mental harm during the investigation. Participants should not be exposed to risks. More especially in research involving children, such as this research, great caution should be exercised when discussing the results with parents, teachers or others. It is therefore imperative that I give them feedback on the results of the project on completion of the study. I have discussed some of my findings with the deputy principal of one school (model C school) and he is interested to pursue the role of culture using parents of the same schools. One would remember that I deliberately left parents out of this particular study when conducting the research.

Also, I would like to pose this question, how ethically correct is it to encourage participants to participate in an empirical study? It is clear for the very benefit of all the stakeholders, that participants should not be forced to participate in a study. Therefore, they should be able to participate on a voluntary basis and withdraw from the study if they no longer want to be part of it. This implies that participation in an empirical study should not be coerced. According to Robson (1993: 473) a participant has the right to retrospectively withdraw any consent given, and require that their own data, including recordings, be destroyed. Luckily for me, not a single person pulled out.

Finally, what makes my study ethically sound? My philosophical approaches rely on conceptual analyses and deconstruction – both modes of justifying arguments. For me the actual ethical justification lies in the reasons and ways of inquiry I adopt and use to substantiate my arguments. Thus, if my reasons are philosophical and some of my techniques are empirical, the ethical value of this research lies in how well I make a credible argument.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter uses narratives as a theoretical basis for collection and analysis of data. The narrative inquiry employed in this section is an interpretive, qualitative method of research. Three forms of data capturing, in the form of questionnaires, focus group analysis and journal entries, were used. These tools enabled me to gain a bigger picture of what is taking place in schools, and more especially in the structure of school governance which is the focus of this study. Data derived by these tools are analysed in the next chapter (chapter 4). Data that is to be generated will be used to generate school governance theory i.e. a new model of school governance.

I now move on to the next chapter, that of analytical and interpretive procedure of data analysis, in order to find more evidence for a lack of learner participation on SGBs.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS: EXPLORING A LACK OF DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the procedures for analysis of qualitative data derived from the questionnaires, focus group interviews and journal entries. Analysis involves “working with data, organising it, breaking it down, synthesising it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what one will tell others” (Bogdan and Biklen 1982: 154). Questionnaires from school principals were analysed by identifying themes based upon patterns and ideas that emerge from the data.

The procedure I used for the analysis of focus group data from educators was borrowed from phenomenology¹⁸. Phenomenology is a philosophical strategy of analysing data where priority is given to the actual words spoken by the participant. According to Campbell (n.d.), phenomenology has its origins in the thinking of the German philosopher Husserl and the French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty that which Crotty cited in Campbell (n.d.) calls the classical phenomenologist approach. According to Giorgi (1999: 69) the term

¹⁸ According to Van Manen cited in Campbell (n.d.) phenomenology is an exploration of the essence of lived experience, *Lebenswelt*. The German philosopher Martin Heidegger, Husserl's colleague and most brilliant critic, claimed that phenomenology should make manifest what is hidden in ordinary, everyday experience. It must seek to obtain the typical essence or structure of a range of experiences in order to precisely try to understand the variations better. Judging from what the phenomenologists have already said, phenomenology claims to grasp the essence because to return to the variations with knowledge of the essence renders the variations more intelligible. Giorgi (1999) in agreement with Van Manen goes on to highlight the fact that phenomenologists do not seek essences merely for their own sake, but in order to make deeper sense of a multiple and varied concrete experiences.

“phenomenology” comes from the word “phenomenon” which means, “to make manifest” or “to bring to light”. The fundamental point of departure of the phenomenological approach from traditional natural scientific research is that; priority is given to the phenomenon under investigation rather than to an already established methodological framework (this being secondary).

Journal entries were analysed by reading through the data and looking for primary patterns e.g. words, phrases, behaviours, thoughts and events, which are repeated and stand out. After realising the patterns I synthesised themes that emerged from questionnaires, focus group discussions and journal entries. The concern and the rationale behind the analysis was twofold: first, to reveal everyday meanings and experiences of educators and learners and the factors that determine their behaviour, and second, to be able to do so without disturbing the data, retaining the voice and the sense of originality.

I now discuss the analysis procedure of narratives after data collection.

4.2 Analysis of Narratives

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 127) assert that there are three sets of considerations within questions of method in narrative inquiry: theoretical considerations, practical, field text-oriented considerations; and interpretive-analytic considerations, as one moves from field texts to research texts. They maintain that theoretically, the main issue is for inquirers to sort out a narrative view of experience. They further posit that, as people make the transition from field texts to research texts, they try to interweave their research experience of the experience under study with narrative ways of going about an inquiry with that phenomenon (Clandinin & Connelly 2000: 128).

As I pursued my research work, I focused on trying to understand both educators' and learners' experiences narratively, which meant thinking about their experiences in terms of the three-dimensional inquiry space; that is, along temporal dimensions, personal-social dimensions, and within place. Czarniawska (1998: 65) also maintains that when attempts to collect material from the field have been successful, the researcher is rewarded with a pile of texts. According to him, some are written in numbers, some in words, some are written by the researcher (e.g. interview records and field notes), and some are written by other people (e.g. documents and press clippings).

After this exercise the researcher has to analyse and interpret the data in front of her/him. At this stage Czarniawska (1998: 67) classifies interpretation into three stages: explication, explanation, and exploration. Explication is described as the reproductive translation in which the interpreter chooses to stand under the text, aiming at understanding it. He describes explanation as an employment of an inferential detection to analyse, whereby the reader stands over the text. This can be done in many ways, depending on the preference of the reader. Moreover, he maintains that the conventional scientific analysis sees this stage as an explanation of the seepage from reality into the text.

Czarniawska (1998) further asserts that social scientists have a professional duty to proceed to the third stage i.e. the stage of exploration, in which readers stand in for the author, thus constructing a new text with the original one as a starting point. This according to him might mean constructing a text from scratch (in opposition to the one already existing), a reconstruction, or a deconstruction of the one that exists. This is the stage which I followed in the next chapter (Chapter 5) of this study.

At this moment I move on to the actual analysis of the data and the question is: What should I do as a narrative inquirer? The answer to this question is provided

by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who assert that narrative inquirers need to ask questions such as: Who are the characters in the study? Why am I writing? What am I trying to convey? What personal, practical, and theoretical contexts should give meaning to the inquiry and its outcomes? And what forms would our final research texts take? Some of the questions proposed by these theorists were attempted as transformation of data from field to research text was undertaken.

4.2.1 Transforming raw data

Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 121) believe that narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical. According to these theorists, the research interests come out of people's own narratives of experience and shape their narrative inquiry plotlines. They further believe that, for narrative inquirers, it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and sense of significance and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others.

Data analysis is a process of unlocking information hidden in the raw data and transforming it into something useful and meaningful. In the process of unlocking this raw data, Aanstoos (1983) recommends Giorgi's (1970) procedure of identifying central themes, and then articulating the structural coherence of those themes. Using the same procedure in this study, the themes were reviewed to identify the experiential statement in the participants' own words, each representing specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions, as expressed by the participant. A synthesis was made of those constituents that were irreducible elements. Any and all relevant data were worked into the revised, final description. According to Aanstoos (1983), the analysis must remain faithful to the descriptive nature of the data, to disclose its essential meaning directly rather than on the basis of a hypothetical framework, and this was what I did next.

In this section, my narrative inquiry intention was to hear stories of both educators' and learners' experiences. Through hearing their stories, I was in a better position to create a research text that illuminated the experiences not only of educators, but also of how the discourse of the social and theoretical contexts shaped learners' relationships with other stakeholders in this structure of governance. As I have alluded to in the introduction to this chapter, a phenomenological analysis was relevant in this regard, as phenomenologists claim that the operative word in phenomenological research is 'describe'. The next step was to analyse the raw data.

4.2.2 Data analysis

This section presents data from five principals of different schools. The responses of two female principals and three male principals to questions (collected through a questionnaire) were gathered in order to construct the principals' experiences of democratic participation in their schools and were analysed. Educators' perspectives collected by means of focus group interviews followed, and lastly learners' journal writings were analysed. In the process of data analysis, I tried to retain the voice and the sense of originality. The narrative method, which is pursued in this section, allows for the telling of and listening to the stories. Themes that emerged form the basis of the findings for this chapter and the analysis is based on governance experiences, participation and communication experiences, decision-making and capacity building experiences (see appendix 3 questionnaire).

The narratives from principals of schools follow.

4.3 School principal A

The principal from school A (PA) maintains that learners are given their own opportunity to elect their learner representative council (LRC) through a voting

system. He mentions that they have a specific criterion for the selection of learners through a representation from educators.

Learners are elected through teacher liaison officer (TLO). The liaison educator helps learners by calling them to a meeting. The TLO makes them to be fully aware of the fact that those learners who are elected to represent other learners are not there to raise complaints of the dissatisfaction all the time. They are elected so as to help in the development of the school (PA).

PA thinks that they do not experience any communication problems due to the fact that the mother tongue (Xhosa) and English are both used as languages of communication during the SGB meetings to cater for all the members of school governance. By so doing the principal is of the opinion that each and every member is able to deliberate and argue when discussions are open. He also believes that learners are given equal access to information just as other stakeholders are, and he adds that they are important members and he thinks that they cannot be ignored or treated differently as they should have a say in matters that affect their school.

Yes, because they form part of school governance they cannot be ignored as they play different roles in the handling of school matters for effective and efficient management. If one of them is ignored conflict may occur (PA).

Furthermore, he asserts that learners perform a meaningful role in the structure of governance as they contribute to the smooth running of the school. The principal believes that learners are given a fair opportunity to voice their ideas and on top of that they are respected as they grow. He also voices the opinion that the teachers are the ones who handle learners with care because they have

some understanding of learner behaviour and attitude. But he also points out that parents have a negative attitude towards learners and sometimes treat learners badly. According to him, parents sometimes feel that learners need not be informed of everything that is happening in the school, and they (parents) underestimate the role and importance of learners in school governance as they believe that they are too young.

Parents sometimes complain that they are children they do not need to know everything and sometimes parents feel that learners are learners, they should study books (PA).

According to principal A, although there is sometimes an element of mistrust between parents and learners he is confident that all members respect each other. He points out that when it is time for deliberation all stakeholders accept the learner delegation and they commit to each other for the sake of good governance. He also mentions that in his school SGB meetings are held once a month and he appreciates the fact that learners are part of decision-making as it capacitates and exposes them as future leaders.

He is very confident of the fact that school governance is able to solve problems in his school. He thinks that learners, by being part of decision-making, minimise conflict.

I like it because it capacitates them, exposes them and minimise[s] conflicts. It is the responsibility of the school to involve learners in the day-to-day school activities as a form of enforcing responsibility for their own benefit. They play a very important role in the development of the tone of the school. They call other learners into order (PA).

He asserts that an opportunity for open discussion is allowed before decisions are reached. He further explains that learners are always allowed to be present in the meetings, especially when issues affecting them are to be discussed.

They feel honoured. Such status boost[s] their self-esteem and allows them the opportunity to voice their own ideas if they know that someone will listen to them. Learner representatives help in keeping good relations among learners and educators. They also help in preventing crime, fighting, punctuality, absenteeism and keeping order in the school environment (PA).

According to the above quote, he is of the opinion that having learners as members of school governance boosts their self-esteem. But he also points out that when crucial (serious) decisions are to be taken they do not involve the learners:

Not always, it depends. I feel it is not good to invite learners in issues like educator misbehaviour and educator conflicts as these might affect the dignity of the educator towards learners. Some issues should be confidential to the school management team and the parent body of the SGB (PA).

Lastly, the principal believes that when there is no agreement to be reached during meetings they resort to the voting system and they allow majority rule to win.

4.3.1 School principal B

The principal from school B (PB), unlike the principal from school A, maintains that the school governing body is elected by a secret ballot in her school. For

school B it is the responsibility of learners to elect their own representative members for participation in school governance.

The learners are elected in a democratic way because they are given an opportunity to choose whom they feel will represent them in the school governing body. The learners are often given democratic participation by having meetings to decide whom to represent them in the SGB. They often do that on their own with no external interference (PB).

Communication, according to principal B, is not hindered during meetings as the only language that is used is the home language (isiXhosa) and no other language is used. But she is quick to point out that learners do not contribute much although there are no language barriers. She then suggests factors other than language that hinder learner participation.

The learners are shy to talk in a meeting, maybe this is due to age or they feel insecure. But they are voiceful on issues like sport and social activities. When it comes to educational related issues they seem passive, this might be the inadequate knowledge and the exposure to the world around them. Learners are shy and reserved when issues do not affect them. They are interested in sport, tours, not in educational issues such as the curriculum design and development (PB).

Principal B asserts that learners are not really given equal access to information as are other stakeholders in her school and by so doing she confirms the fact that there is no democratic participation. She agrees that although they do not yet perform a meaningful role in governance, she maintains that from time to time they are given a fair chance.

They are not treated equally due to age query and their maturity (PB).

She thinks that learners who are part of SGBs are not being treated fairly or well by other stakeholders as the parent component has mixed feelings about learner participation. She points out that although parents have mixed feelings on learner participation they are not the ones who treat them badly.

There is an element of inequality on parent component and learner component. Teacher component treat[s] them badly (PB).

She agrees that there is some element of mistrust in the structure of school governance in her school. She maintains that when decisions are to be taken, only parents, the principal and educators are allowed to take such decisions during their quarterly meetings of school governance. But she views that kind of decision-making as decision by consensus.

She does not feel comfortable where learners are to take decisions with parents and educators and this is the reason why she does not fully support their participation. She agrees though that before decisions are to be taken, they allow an open slot for discussions to be held by everybody and learners are allowed to deliberate, argue or give their own opinion. She explains that if there are opposing views during the meeting, active individuals drag out the meeting until those who oppose are shown the correct way in a friendly manner. In her school though, they do accept learners' input provided that it is constructive.

She also mentions that learners are not always present when decisions are to be taken, and more especially when crucial or serious decisions are to be made.

When there are critical issues, irregularities on the teacher's side, the parent component is reluctant to involve learner component nursing their insecurity or lack of technical handling of the matter [of] concern (PB).

She then agrees that more often than not other parties took decisions with the exclusion of the learner component.

4.3.2 School principal C

The principal from school C (PC) rates the ability of his school's SGB in resolving problems as not very effective. In his school only educators elect the learner component of school governance. Like other school principals, he says the dominant language which is used in the school is isiXhosa, but he agrees that even then, learners are not always given equal access to school governance.

Parents and teachers are treated equally but it's not always the case with learners, not always because some decisions are taken without them (PC).

The principal believes that learners are always seen as children in his school. He is also of the opinion that educators, unlike parents, who are always considerate when it comes to learners, are always unfriendly towards them and in the process treat them badly.

They don't treat each other as equal partners (PC).

As stated by principals of other schools, when there is no agreement during decision-making during school governance meetings, a final decision is taken by means of a vote and all members have to settle their differences amicably. He also mentions that school governance meetings are held on a regular basis depending on the importance of issues to be discussed and learners always form part of decision-making, but he points out that learners do not often attend meetings.

Sometimes they do but it always depends on the subject matter (PC).

The principal thinks it is a good idea to involve learners in decision-making and he also believes that the idea should be encouraged. He has the problem of trying to make the structure of school governance accept learner participation, but has noticed this is not an easy task as other stakeholders do not always treat each other as equal partners. He is also of the opinion that learners are able to deliberate, argue and voice their own opinions and the school takes the input from learners seriously.

4.3.3 School principal D

The principal from school D (PD) rates his school mechanism for solving problems as very effective. According to him, when it is time for the election of the learner component of school governance, they make use of a secret ballot and learners themselves elect each other. Learners in his school are allowed to deliberate, argue and give their own opinions, which means that their voices are heard.

Communication in school D is not a problem at all. Before the school governance meeting is to be held, the school secretary distributes letters to all members and sometimes the principal personally invites them. During the meetings isiXhosa is used for the benefit of all members, including learners. During the meetings each stakeholder, including learners, is free to air his/her views as members treat each other on an equal basis. Principal D asserts that, even before the meetings, information of what is to be discussed is circulated among the members of school governance because they do not want to delay the process of the meeting.

When actual decisions are to be taken they do not vote but conduct proper consultation and hearings, but the principal concludes this sentence by saying if

“needs be” (PD). When asked about the person who actually takes decisions in the school governance his response is, “the chairperson” (PD).

In his school SGB meetings are held quarterly. Principal D maintains that when there are serious decisions to be taken in his school they do not always involve the learners as there are conditions they have to stipulate in some situations. This response came as a surprise to me as it contradicts his earlier statements. In fact his direct answer after the above response is “no”.

Not always, depending on the nature of the issues (PD).

He also maintains that they do not involve learners when crucial decisions are to be taken. When asked whether decisions are taken collectively in his school his answer is “sometimes”. Looking at his response tells me that all is not as well as Principal D wants me to believe. He says that he becomes more comfortable if the items to be discussed are not very sensitive to the elders.

Well, if the items are not delicate to elders’ behaviour (PD).

Lastly, if there are opposing views in school D, just like at other schools, decisions are arrived at after the house vote on the issue.

4.3.4 School principal E

The principal from school E believes that school governance is not that effective at her school. Just like other schools, isiXhosa is used because it is the dominant language of the region. During the election of school governance and more especially the learner component, learners are given the opportunity to elect their own members who are to represent them in school governance. She maintains that in her school learners are given equal access to information just like other members of school governance.

The problem the principal faces during the school governance meetings is that members from the parent component attend meetings when drunk. According to her, this behaviour sometimes makes the learners feel uncomfortable. The principal feels that the parent component sometimes insults the learners as they behave rudely towards them and due to this kind of behaviour learners sometimes lose interest in attending the meetings.

In some meetings more especially here maybe its because we are in the rural areas where members go drunk, they insult and behave rudely towards learners, and they lose interest in such meetings (PE).

The condition in this school differs from other schools as it is the parent component that comes to the school governance meetings and does not want to contribute in the discussions. According to the principal, they would come and say nothing on some days and the discussions would only centre on teachers and learners. But despite the positive role of learners in school governance, the principal feels that learners do not perform a meaningful role. She believes that learners are passive "In most cases they are passive" (PE) although they are given a fair chance to express their views.

Yes, because they are given a chance to express their views and say what they want to say (PE).

According to the principal, some members in the school governance, more especially adults, do not respect one another. She thinks that their behaviour is not exemplary.

Adults think that they can solve these problems without learners because when learners are involved they also see how adults can behave because

some adults shout and get out of the meetings without reaching conclusions (PE).

Despite parental behaviour, the principal has to make sure that learners attend all meetings. At the same time the principal herself does not feel comfortable discussing issues with learners.

Really we do not feel good, but we are used to it as policy stipulates (PE).

The principal maintains that when there is no consensus during the meetings they force the matter and members will be forced to agree. According to the principal they do not consider other stakeholders' feelings.

In any meeting there are always opposing views, even then we do not stop we force the matters in any way (PE).

School E differs from other schools when it comes to the involvement of learners when crucial or serious decisions are to be taken and the principal does not hide the fact that decisions are not taken collectively by all stakeholders:

We involve them because it is a government policy. Sometimes Yes, sometimes No, and Yes, if reasonable. Children will always be children, we do not say yes to everything they want (PE).

When asked if they accept opinions and suggestions from learners the principal responds as follows:

Those that are valuable are considered those that are not are not, we explain to them. They like to criticise and fault finding sometimes (PE).

I now move on to the explication of themes from educators' focus group discussions.

4.4 Educators' transcripts

The following five texts depict the conditions of the life world of learners in the structure of school governance, through the eyes of educators in five carefully selected schools in the Mthatha region of the Eastern Cape Province. The aim is to unveil the perception of educators concerning the role of learners, their experience and their democratic participation in school governance in their respective schools.

I analysed the data using the natural meaning units (NMUs) which were loosely structured with the intention that the structures give order and flow to what might otherwise have been jumbled up statements. These are the central themes, which form the basis for general and situated descriptions of the respondents' experience of the phenomenon. These naturally occurring units called natural meaning units (NMUs) "represent specific thoughts, feelings, or perceptions, as expressed by the participant" (Heath 2000: 55).

Heath called the above NMUs protocols. According to Heath (2000) these are the experiential statements in the participant's own words which are expressed by the respondent during the interview session. In support of Heath, Van der Mescht (1996: 4) asserts that one should "allow a phenomenon to speak for itself". This is why the following tables are structured in such a way as to avoid disturbing the actual words spoken by the respondent and to allow the phenomenon to speak for itself i.e. phenomenon for phenomenology.

4.4.1 School A

Educators School A	Natural Meaning Units (NMU)
1. As we are talking to you, we are members of the school governing body. The structure is composed of the principal, teachers, non-teaching staff parents and learners.	They see themselves as members of the school governing body in their school, a structure that is made up of all designated people such as parents, educators and learners.
2. I can't say our SGB is doing well or is doing what it is supposed to do. infact I can say, it is not very effective.	One of the members is not convinced that the SGB structure is doing well and is performing the duties it is supposed to do. She condemns it as not an effective structure at all.
3. We are a combined school from grade R to grade 12. The school governance is elected by means of official school governing body election procedure as set out in the South African School's Act.	As a combined school, they see themselves as following procedures as stipulated by the South African Schools Act regarding the governance of public schools.
4. Learners, who are to be elected to be members of SGB, are elected by educators and one member of school management team (SMT) in our school. They do not always elect according to abilities or skills but they consider their friends. In most instances, learners who are supposed to be elected are not elected. Learners	They believe that learners should not be given an opportunity to elect themselves but instead they should be elected by educators and the school management team. Among the reasons they mention is that learners do not choose according to abilities and skills but instead will choose those they prefer most even if he/she is not good

would choose whom they want to as they please, their friends or whom they prefer.	enough.
5. We do have criteria for selection for example all sexes must be represented.	They feel that all sexes need to be represented in the structure of school governance.
6. In our SGB we do have seven parents, three educators and two learners.	They maintain that their structure of school governance is made up of seven parents, three educators and two learners. They feel that such a structure is properly constituted as it is.
7. Because we are a coloured school in a coloured community, we use Afrikaans during our SGB meetings.	The dominant language is Afrikaans as it is a coloured community, and every one is included through this language use.
8. No, learners are not given equal access to information like other stakeholders. They are inexperienced and they do not know what is expected of them.	They feel that learners are being undermined as they are not given equal access to information as are other stakeholders as they are inexperienced and do not even know what is expected of them.
9. Sometimes it is easy to notice that they lack interest in what is being discussed. Learners often attend the first two or three meetings and thereafter they are absent as they do not find matters that are discussed interesting. Due to their absence or lack of interest, other stakeholders do	They regret the fact that learners sometimes show lack of interest in what is being discussed. They feel that learners absent themselves from attending meetings just because they do not find matters that are being discussed challenging and interesting. Educators view this as one of the

not take their opinion and participation seriously.	reasons why learner participation is not taken seriously.
10. They do not always attend meetings because parents and some adults believe that the SGB committee is only meant for adults. Sometimes learners are not even invited to meetings when their input and participation is not needed. I do believe that learners at this level are not intellectually and emotionally ready for this kind of responsibility.	They feel that parents monopolise the SGB structure as belonging to adults and as no place for children. They feel that learners should be left out of the SGB meetings because they are not intellectually and emotionally ready to carry the burden of school governance. Because of that they feel that learner's input and participation is not needed as such.
11. Parents believe that children have too many rights, which are the cause of disciplinary problems in the school, but educators and the principal regard it as their duty to bring learners on board.	Educators put the blame on parents as they feel that it is them (parents) who view learners as having too many rights to exercise. They blame learners' rights as the cause of ill discipline among learners. They believe that too many rights hinder school progress and good governance.
12. A circular is circulated to all members of the SGB informing them of a pending meeting and the items to be discussed. But always you will find very poor attendance. Meetings sometimes last up to two and a half hours and learners are not used to this.	They feel that communication is good as circulars are sent before an SGB meeting is scheduled. They are very surprised as to why there is always poor attendance. They also blame the length of time the meetings take as a possible reason that contributes to absenteeism of learners.
13. Everyone's input is taken into	They feel that each and every stake-

consideration. Everything is discussed and people are listened to. There are no hard feelings when there is disagreement and difference of opinion.	holder input, including that of learners, is taken seriously. According to them, if there is disagreement or difference of opinion it is solved amicably.
14. We are not very keen about learners taking decisions with parents and teachers.	They do not hide the fact that they are not keen about learners taking decisions with parents and themselves.
15. If there are opposing views, a special meeting is set to discuss the matter.	They feel that nothing is forced on members who are not in the majority because if there is no agreement on the matter, a special meeting will be called until the matter is resolved.
16. There is an active exchange of ideas among all members including learners, but they are not always given the same chance as other members to voice their opinion when decisions are to be taken.	They believe that an active exchange of ideas exists among all members including learners. But at the same time they see learners as not always being given the same opportunity as other members to voice their opinion during decision-making time.
17. Learners are not always present when decisions are taken because when there are crucial decisions to be taken we do not involve them. As a result of that the input from learners is not always taken seriously.	They feel that when crucial decisions are to be taken, they do not need learners. By so doing they admit that learners' input is not always taken into serious consideration.
18. I can say that learners are not given equal status just like parents and	They feel that although they do not give them equal status with other

educators. We do give them an opportunity to be tomorrow's leaders, but what we do at the moment is not enough.	stakeholders, they do give them an opportunity to be tomorrow's leaders. They also acknowledge the fact that their attempts at the moment are not enough.
19. There is no development and growth that I can say I notice is taking place to those learners who are part of the SGB.	They feel that at the moment they do not witness any form of development and growth among learners who are part of the SGB.
20. There is no kind of training that they are given to serve as a form of empowerment, and there is no such support they enjoy from other members.	They do acknowledge that there is no kind of training learners receive to serve as a form of empowerment, and in addition to that, learners do not enjoy support from other members.
21. Communication is generally not good.	They feel that communication is not generally good.
22. At the beginning of each year the RCL is elected to represent learners on the SGB, but there are no workshops or leadership camps or orientation held to prepare those elected learners.	They feel that there are no workshops or leadership camps or any form of orientation held to prepare those elected to be members of school governance.

4.4.2 School B

Educators School B	Themes
1. The school governing body is composed of five parents, three educators and four learners	They see the school governance as legitimate as it is formed by the three stakeholders who are by law the rightful people to be in this structure of

	governance, i.e. parents, educators and learners.
2. There are no criteria for who is elected or not in our school. We need learners who are not shy, and are well behaved, clever and diligent.	For them, they say they do not have any particular criteria, but at the same time they maintain that they need learners who are not shy, but well behaved, clever and diligent.
3. The school is multi-racial because it is a former model C school. The language that is dominant during the SGB meetings is English, and learners are given equal access to information.	They feel that they have no problem with communication. They also give their learners equal access to information just like other stakeholders.
4. Here in our school learners are given a fair chance to exercise their rights because all stakeholders respect each other.	In this school, learners are given a fair chance to exercise their rights as all stakeholders respect one another.
5. I had never heard about any misunderstanding. The whole structure of governance takes decisions after consulting other stakeholders if necessary.	According to them, they do not experience any problems or misunderstandings as decisions are taken through consultation. They also finish the sentence using the word 'necessary', and this raises suspicion.
6. Learners do not attend all meetings; they attend those meetings that will only benefit them.	They say that learners do not attend all meetings, just those that directly affect them.
7. I see nothing wrong with that, as long as they are not involved in crucial issues like teacher confrontations.	They are more comfortable with learners being present in the SGB meetings as long as there are no crucial issues to be discussed on that

	particular day such as teacher confrontation.
8. Learners are allowed to take the kind of decisions that benefit them.	They feel that learners are allowed to take the kind of decisions that benefit them.
9. Learners are only involved when decisions involve learner issues and not parent and teacher issues. When decisions are crucial for example, learners are not allowed to attend and usually they are not involved.	They feel that they do not need learners to be present when there are matters affecting educators and parents. They maintain that when decisions are crucial learners should not attend.
10. When their time comes, they are allowed to argue and give their own opinion and are taken seriously if what they say is constructive and if it is for the benefit of all members.	They feel that learners are given their chance to deliberate and argue especially if what they say is constructive and will also benefit all learners in the school as a whole.
11. Learners are allowed to oppose decisions but if they do they must come up with a solution.	They say that learners are allowed to oppose decisions, but they themselves should offer the solution.
12. I do notice that these learners who are members of school governance are developing and growing day in and day out. We do encourage them to do better to become future leaders.	They feel that learners who are part of school governance are benefiting as they continue to develop and grow.
13. I do believe that there should be transparency; consultation and language used should be suitable to everyone.	They believe in transparency, consultation and suitable language for their school governance members.
14. All schools have their own	They acknowledge the fact that all

problems. It is important for SGB members to focus on the situation before it explodes.	schools experience problems in relation to school governance, but they believe that SGB members should try and contain the situation before it explodes.
15. The South African Schools Act does not mention anything about consultation of learners especially when issues such as school deciding to raise school fees is discussed.	They blame the South African Schools Act for not providing guidance in relation to learner consultation more especially in matters such as raising of school fees.
16. What I can say is that, it is very crucial to involve learners especially when matters are pertaining to them.	They are confident of the involvement of learners more especially when issues directly affect them.
17. The Department of Education officials need to intervene and speak out to parents, teachers and learners about the importance of working together at all times.	They do need the education officials to intervene and engage parents and learners about the importance of working together at all times.

4.4.3 School C

Educators School C	Themes
1. When it comes to the rating of the ability in solving problems in our school, I can easily say it is more effective.	The educators in school C are very confident of their SGB's ability to solve problems and be powerful and effective.
2. In this school learners do not elect one another; it is the duty of educators to elect them.	They feel that learners should not elect each other and that duty should be left to educators.
3. When it comes to the election of	They maintain that they do not

learners there is no kind of criteria that we use.	have any kind of criteria for choosing learners for the SGB.
4. Parents are in the majority, there are six parents, two educators and three learners and Xhosa is used on all occasions.	They feel that parents are in the majority, rather than educators or learners. During their meetings isiXhosa is used to accommodate everybody including learners.
5. To tell you an honest truth, learners are not given a chance to exercise democracy, as they have not even always been informed of all the meetings.	They feel that learners are not given a chance to exercise their democratic rights in school governance. They acknowledge the fact that they are not always even informed of pending meetings.
6. I can say they do not perform a meaningful role because they are not given enough chance.	They accept that learners do not perform a meaningful role in school governance as they are not given enough opportunity to do so.
7. There is no atmosphere of sameness that I can say prevails in our SGB structure, as they do not treat each other as equal partners.	They agree that there is no atmosphere of sameness that prevails in their structure of governance, as members do not treat each other as equal partners.
8. There are no frequent meetings of school governance, they only happen from time to time. But, when it comes to learners, they attend meetings when there is an issue or a need that involves them.	They accept the fact that there are no frequent SGB meetings, but maintain that learners attend the meetings only when there is an issue pertaining to them.
9. I think it is a good idea for learners	They are happy with the fact that

to be decision-makers together with parents and educators as this shows democracy.	learners are decision-makers together with parents and educators. According to them this proves that they adhere to democratic principles and practices.
10. When there are opposing views, and in order to rectify the situation, the school policy is consulted and the final decision will be taken after all members vote on the issue concerned.	They feel that there are times when people do not see eye to eye, but they say that a final decision is taken by all stakeholders after members vote on the issue.
11. Learners are not always present when meetings are conducted because sometimes SGB meetings are held during school hours and those educators who are not members of school governance will be teaching at the time.	They acknowledge the fact that learners are not always present during SGB meetings as sometimes meetings are held during school hours when those educators who are not part of school governance are busy teaching.
12. We all agree that we do not need children when crucial decisions are to be taken.	They take learners as children and as a result they say they do not need children when crucial decisions are taken. They do take decision without the participation of learners.
13. We do take them seriously and their input is taken into consideration. But members of school governance backbite each other.	They see that they take them seriously but they do have problems with other stakeholders who do not want to confront each other openly.
14. There is no active exchange of ideas among all members including learners.	They feel that there is no exchange of ideas among members.

15. Learners when it comes to arguments and discussions, they just became passive, as they do not want to share their ideas in the presence of adults.	They have problems with learners as they do not want to argue. They say that learners would come and just sit quietly and be passive instead of being active participants.
16. I can't say there is development because they do not even attend all meetings. But, I can say they gain valuable skills such as leadership and communication.	They are not sure whether there are any signs of development in those learners who are part of the SGB, but they are confident of them gaining valuable skills such as leadership and communication.
17. There is no kind of training that learners are expected to undergo.	They feel that learners are not given any kind of training for participation in SGBs.
18. It is the duty of the school at the end of the year to inform learners about the expenditure and income. Take for example, if the school has done a fund raising activity, they have a right to know about the money.	They feel that it is one of the duties of the school to reveal to learners the income and expenditure, particularly towards the end of the year.

4.4.4 School D

Educators School D	Themes
1. Here in our school the school governance is not very effective.	They view their school governance as ineffective.
2. The learners from grade 8 upwards elect one another, and the teacher liaison officer guides learners during	They maintain that learners elect one another in the presence of the teacher liaison officer (TLO). The

election. The liaison officer does that in order to build a trusting relationship with the representative council of learners.	only involvement of the TLO is to build a trusting relationship with those who will eventually be elected.
3. The school management team member also took part in the election of learners, but he does that in order to promote communication. He encourages learners to participate regularly in SGB meetings and to respect educators, parents and learners.	They say that not only is the TLO present during election but an SMT member also makes herself/himself available so as to promote communication. The duty of an SMT member is to encourage regular participation of learners in the SGB meetings and to promote respect for learners towards parents, educators and fellow learners.
4. In our school governance, we have five parents, two educators and one learner who form part of the SGB team in this school. They have a duty to create mutual respect, good manners and morality among learners.	Their school governance is constituted as follows: five parents, two educators and two learners. The elected stakeholders have a duty to create mutual respect, good manners and morality among learners.
5. I believe this is a fair number because all stakeholders are included.	They feel this is a fair number as all the required stakeholders are present.
6. I can say that all stakeholders are given equal access as they all attend all meetings convened by the SGB.	They feel that all stakeholders are given equal access because they all attend meetings convened for SGB purposes.

7. In our school, we need learners who are critical thinkers, visionary learners and supportive learners.	When choosing the RCL members they need learners whom they believe are critical thinkers, visionary and supportive.
8. Here educators treat learners with respect, but parents still have that community or society feeling about children.	They feel that educators treat learners with respect but they are sceptical of parent treatment towards learners. They believe that parents cling to the past, having been influenced by societal practices on how to treat children.
9. In our society, children will always be children, and are not allowed to speak when parents or adults are speaking, in fact they are not even supposed to be in the room when adults are speaking, unless they are invited.	They feel that in their society, children will always be children no matter what happens. They are not allowed to say a word in the presence of parents or adults, especially when there is an issue to be discussed. In fact they are not even allowed to be in the same room as adults unless they are involved in the matter being discussed.
10. The SGB meetings are held regularly and there is an open discussion because every participant is given a chance to negotiate.	They feel that during the SGB meetings all stakeholders including learners are given a fair chance to deliberate and negotiate in an open discussion.
11. Decisions are arrived at through consultation as well as through	They feel that they take decisions after consulting all stakeholders,

consensus and they all took decisions.	and when they all arrived at a consensual decision.
12. All SGB members tolerate and respect one another and the vote is being taken as a measure to decide on the matter.	They feel that members tolerate one another and they took a vote so as to verify and to arrive at a fair decision for all.
13. Even when crucial decisions are to be taken, by law, learners should attend as they are part of the school governance team.	They maintain that even if decisions are to be taken, by law and by virtue of being part of the team, learners need to be present.
14. What I like is that power and decision-making is being shared and there is learner representivity. They negotiate and they give input.	They are happy about the fact that power and decision-making is being shared and there is learner representivity in all matters. They feel that learners are able to negotiate and to make their input felt.
15. Yes, we do respect their opinion, as they are allowed to ask questions and are listened to.	Learners' input is respected as they are allowed to ask questions and they are listened to.
16. Learners have a power to oppose or support an idea.	They feel that learners have the power to oppose or support an idea.
17. We use them mostly on issues such as late coming of their classmates and dress codes.	Here learners are used mostly on issues such as late arriving of their classmates and for uniform policies of the school.
18. We empower them on skills such as communication skills, listening, power sharing, planning and many	They feel that learners are being empowered especially with skills such as communication, listening,

others.	sharing and planning.
20. Communication is good because every component is informed about school issues (regularly).	They feel that communication is good and all stakeholders are kept informed.
21. They are given the opportunity to be tomorrow's leaders.	They feel that those who are members of SGB are ready to be future leaders.

4.4.5 School E

Educators School E	Themes
1. We are not sure whether our SGB is able to solve problems in our school.	The educators here are not confident whether the SGB is able to solve problems in their school.
2. In my school learners are not given a chance, they are in the governing body just for the sake of being there to make the required number needed.	They feel that learners are not given a chance, but they are in the school governance for the sake of being there, just to grace the SGB.
3. There is no criterion that is followed during the election of the learner representative council, but learners are elected by the school management team.	They say they do not have any criteria, they use for the election of the learner representative council on the SGB, but at the same time they also say that learners do not elect themselves as they are elected by the SMT.
4. There are three parents, three educators and two learners – a boy and a girl. The boy reports to the boys and the girl reports to the girls.	Although they say they do not have criteria for election of the RCL, they make sure that there is a boy and a girl, which seems like criteria.
5. I do not believe this is a fair number	The educators feel that this is not a fair

as learners are in the majority if we are to consider the number of learners in the school as a whole.	number, having three parents, three educators and two learners. They feel that if one is to consider the number of learners in the whole school, learners should be in the majority.
6. In most cases, learners are left out. They do not have a say in the meetings, they sit and smile. In some meetings they are not even invited.	They feel that in most cases learners are left out of decision-making. They feel that learners do not contribute much during the meetings as they just sit idly and do nothing to contribute to the discussions.
7. If some decisions are taken, there is someone who is tasked to report to them so as to report back to other learners.	They say that there is a person who is tasked to report to the learners who are members of the SGB when they are not in the meeting so that they can report back on the decisions that are taken to learners.
8. I do not think they feel as part of what they are doing, they are isolated.	Educators feel that learners are isolated and they are confident of the fact that they do not see themselves as part of the SGB.
9. Parents and educators treat them similarly. They call the learners after the meeting and tell them what they have decided on, without them being involved in decision-making.	They feel that there is no difference on how parents and educators treat the learners. They say that learners are called after the closure of the meeting as they are not supposed to be there when issues are discussed.
10. Decisions are taken by parents and educators most of the time. When they	They feel that decisions at the school are taken by parents and educators

are present they become quiet as if they are dead.	most of the time. They feel that when learners are eventually present they will sit and be silent as if they are dead.
11. They are taken as kids and are not supposed to take decisions unless it is in sport, tours and farewell functions, which they are allowed to organise.	They feel that learners are treated as kids as kids are not supposed to take any kind of decision. They say that learners are given a chance to take decisions in matters such as sport, tours or in occasions like a farewell function.
12. I do not think this is fair, because they are not given a chance to oppose.	Educators feel that the treatment given to learners is not fair.
13. Most of the time there are no suggestions that come from learners, but if I give you my own opinion I think there is no room to say a thing for them. They just agree on what the educators and parents say.	They feel that learners do not stand a chance in the structure of school governance. Most of the time, according to educators, learners will not suggest anything, but they will agree on what is arrived at in the meeting. Educators also feel that learners are not given a platform to deliberate on matters.
14. The other stakeholders have a negative attitude towards them and their involvement is not taken seriously.	They feel that other stakeholders have a negative attitude towards learners, and as a result their involvement is not taken seriously.
15. They are just there to show that learners are being represented.	They feel that learners just grace the occasion to show the world that they are represented.

16. I never heard of any training given to them. They are not even supported.	Educators feel that there is no kind of training given to learners who are part of the SGB, and they are not even supported.
17. They are not taken seriously and they know that.	They say that learners themselves know that they are not being taken seriously.
18. Meetings are called by written letters to parents where there is an issue to be discussed.	They feel that learners are not informed of the meetings as letters are written and sent only to parents.

I now move on to learners' experiences and feelings through the interpretation of their journal entries which are part of field trips.

4.5 Learner journals

During their week-long journal writing learners were given some questions that acted as a guide for their completion of responses. During the first day they were taken through the procedure and were allowed to complete the questions during their long break period. As there twelve questions, they only answered three a day. These questions were based on the following themes: governance and elections, participation and communication, decision-making and capacity building (see appendix 4).

To my surprise learners, unlike their educators, sounded more positive when articulating their responses and more positive about participating in the SGB structure. I have decided to group learner responses together and not separate them according to their respective schools, because they are almost similar and positive in all schools. Questions will serve as a guide for learner responses.

Question 1: How have you become part of school governance? One response was as follows:

I was nominated by fellow learners in grade 11 to be their representative of learners (RCL) for the current grade 12 year (2006). I was then further nominated by my fellow RCLs who had been nominated for the respective grades to represent them as the vice-president of the RCL committee, a position which required that I attend School Governing Body meetings as a representative for the general interest and to express the views of the school learners at large.

Another response was like this:

I was nominated by learners and the teachers. They nominated me because I used to tell them that charity begins at home.

Question 2: Why do you think you were chosen to represent learners on the school governance? One response was as follows:

I displayed qualities which my fellow pupils felt that their leader should possess (integrity, honesty, etc). Unlike many of my counterparts that wanted to be on the RCL I didn't run a rally to persuade people to vote for me, they did so of their own accord.

Another learner responded as follows:

I was nominated by fellow RCLs and voted for by them as RCL president. As a result of that, I automatically became a member of the SGB. The teachers recognise my nomination. Part of my responsibility is to sit on the SGB meetings and if I have an issue to present I do it at the SGB meetings.

One learner responded as follows:

It was seen that I am an out spoken person. I know how to talk to the learners in a good way. Also I do have a decent way of approaching parents and teachers.

And this was his response to the second question:

Learners need someone to represent them in the SGB. As an RCL president, you are well suited for the job.

One learner said:

I was chosen because of high marks from grade 11, and I am talkative even in the classroom.

Question 3: How do you rate your participation in discussion at the SGB meetings?

The one meeting I attended, I was merely a spectator, just to comprehend how the meetings were run and I only commented when it was necessary. Most of the matters discussed were confidential therefore I cannot divulge these topics. Though the meeting lasted for more than an hour, I felt that the SGB has become a window-shopping effect for the government. Some of the parents are only there to look after the needs of their own children so they neglect the well-being of the school at large as long as their children are happy.

Another response was as follows:

The singular meeting I have attended I only voiced my opinion when I was required to do so, and my personality allows me to command respect from the other SGB members, because I respected their views so they felt obliged to do the same. The meeting was very successful basically.

One learner responded like this:

I listen to all the topics discussed in the meeting and if I can, I give my viewpoint and the viewpoint of other learners. If anything is discussed that directly affects the learners, I report back to the RCL body which will report back to the rest of the learners. If students have grievances which management of the school and the RCL body agrees, I raise the grievance at the meetings.

Question 4: Since you were part of the SGB, how successful have you been as learner in getting your points across in the meeting?

One response was as follows:

So far, I have not needed to raise my points in meeting as all the points are currently under review by the SGB. I would say that I have been more successful as a prefect than as a RCL because the RCL body in my school is not taken as seriously as the prefect body.

Another learner responded as follows:

In all meetings I make it a point that my presence is noticed. Every time my classmates have required or suggested something, I raise them during the period of suggestions. Sometimes they are taken into consideration

Most of the learners see themselves as succeeding in putting their views in the structure of school governance.

Question 5: Please state possible reasons for your answer in Q4 above and write down a few where you have been successful/not successful and do you think what you say at the SGB meetings is taken seriously by other stakeholders?

One learner responded thus:

One example I can think of is of when we were inducted. We as the RCL body did not have enough badges and we had to wait over five (5) months to receive them. The prefect body receives their badges on that day of their induction – not success. Our meetings are supervised by me and we as the students are allowed to dictate our own meetings successfully. One issue that was raised is the issue of the lack of support we as learners receive when it comes to extra-mural activities. It would seem like the school has insufficiently budgeted for our sporting activities. Even though the SGB recognised this problem, the solution to it is taking too long – not successful.

The next response was as follows:

To a certain extent, we are taken seriously, but most of the time we are not.

One learner responded as follows:

The SGB committee consists of primarily parents who have children in the school, so it is in their interest to listen to whatever I have to say as it directly or indirectly involves their children's progress in the school.

Question 6: Do you think what you say in the SGB meetings is taken seriously by other stakeholders? Various responses were articulated by the respondents and some of them were as follows:

When they make decisions concerning the school's management, they do take what we say into consideration.

One response was as follows:

I am not sure because I do not know how they hear the things that I say.
I also do not know if what I say to them is valuable to them.

Another response was as follows:

Yes, SGB members take seriously what I am saying. For example the issue of uniform I raised at the meeting was solved. Learners who do not wear school uniform are punished.

Question 7: What difference do you think your participation in the SGB meetings is making to the decisions that are made by the SGB?

One response was as follows:

My participation in the SGB has made a great difference to the decision made by SGB. As we are children coming from different homes, cultures and different characters, it becomes so easy for them to understand every issue when it is reported by myself after attending the meeting.

Another response was like this

I am able to chair the meetings successfully. My leadership of learners at school has no problems. My participation is making a great difference because the views of the learners are also considered in the SGB meetings.

Question 8: How strongly do you feel about learners taking part in the decision - making with parents and teachers at school?

A response was as follows:

I feel very strongly about it. I feel it is very important for learners to be involved in those decisions as some of them involve us. We should get a say in them.

Some responded like this:

It gives the governing body a chance to understand what happens day to day in the interaction of most students on the school grounds, so that they can base their decisions on more than sufficient information. The interest of the pupils is also taken into consideration, not only what will be best for the staff or SGB or parents.

Others responded as follows:

It is necessary that there be at least one RCL representative at each SGB meeting because I feel that the only way in which the ideas of the pupils at the school can be properly received is if they are represented by the student representatives.

One learner responded like this:

I feel so strong and confident about learners taking part in decision-making with parents and teachers at school because ever since I participated I have never come across the burning issues like learner offence that will lead to being disciplined or dismissed from school.

Question 9: Do you feel you have benefited from being a member of the SGB and would you encourage others to participate in future?

These were some of the responses.

Yes, it always benefits a person to understand how the school is run and why certain decisions are taken and also what influences certain people to arrive at a certain decision. I would encourage other RCL members for the years to come to attend these meetings.

One learner responded as follows:

No, I think it so happens that the SGB forgets their purpose and they start focusing on their own ambitions and what they can get out of the school or themselves and they end up neglecting the rest of the school and the vow they take when they were elected into office to represent the parents and pupils and the school. Some of the members think nothing of it to belittle other people's ideas if they do not fit their idea of how the situation should be handled.

Another responded as follows:

I have benefited. It has given me some responsibility and I have learnt skills on how to handle it. I encourage others to participate in the future, because I believe it will create a better learning environment. It will bring students, teachers and parents closer, for the benefit of the school.

One responded like this:

I believe that the SGB is an effective initiative and it will benefit the education system. It only needs co-operation from all the aspects of the school, teachers, learners and students.

Question 10: Have you been happy with the way in which information regarding school governance is disseminated?

One learner responded as follows:

To a certain extent yes, but I do believe that we need more parents to participate. Most parents just believe that the school is for learners and teachers. They are not interested in the welfare of the school.

Another responded as follows:

I have been so happy by the way in which information regarding school governance has been disseminated because information reaches everyone.

One learner responded like this:

I have not been happy at all because there was a lack of guidance for students and we ended up losing interest.

One learner responded as follows:

Yes, because it is only discussed with the members and only disseminated to the students by the members.

Question 11: what kind of training or skills are you given as members of the SGB?

Here the response was unanimous in every school. The answer was none. They say there is no guidance and no training given.

Question 12: Please feel free to respond to any other issue/s concerning learner participation that is not covered in this questionnaire.

One learner responded as follows:

I'd like to thank the stakeholders for co-operation and co-ordination. Thank my school mates for showing trust in me. By mixing with parents and teachers everybody takes me seriously and I am responsible. I am proud to be a member of SGB.

Another response was like this:

The SGB is working hand in hand with the parents and learners for the smooth running of the school. As an individual, I am very honoured to have worked with them and for the great time we had together ruling the

school. Thanks a lot for making me chairperson of discipline it made me and my parents very much proud.

One learner responded like this:

I just want to encourage the SGBs to stick to the measures and boundaries it is set out to follow. Otherwise, I congratulate the SGB because this school has got development, but I disagree with them in some parts.

Another learner responded as follows:

They should arrange scheduled and proper meetings, so that we know before what should be there for students. They have a tendency of finalising without students, things that concern students e.g. matric dance. They should consult students first as the matric dance is not for them but for students.

I now give a summary of all three of the instruments I used when collecting data for this study. This is sometimes known as triangulation of the findings.

4.6 Summary of findings from questionnaires, focus group discussions and learner journal entries.

Triangulation of findings from the three set of tools is shown by summary implications and theory linkages for each school in relation to governance, participation, communication, decision-making and capacity building.

4.6.1 Summary implications and theory linkages for school principal A

Themes emanating from the data from school A show that there is some form of democratic participation in the school. There are some positive experiences, such

as the fact that learners are given their own opportunity to elect their learner representative council (LRC) through a voting system. Furthermore, learners are elected through the teacher liaison officer (TLO), which shows that there is some form of participation going on in the school. ***“Learners are elected through the teacher liaison officer” (TLO).*** The school allows learners to deliberate and argue, there is open communication and learners are given access to information, and this shows that there is a link between theory and practice in the school. This is a positive step and relates positively to what the study is arguing for (giving voice to the voiceless). ***“If one of them is ignored conflict may occur” (PA).***

However, there are also negative things that could be extracted from the principal's responses which show that democratic participation is not fully practised in the school. ***“Parents sometimes complain that they are children they do not need to know everything and sometimes parents feel that learners are learners, they should study books” (PA).*** The same point that learners are elected through the teacher liaison officer could also have negative consequences. The mere presence of an educator who is also an adult could intimidate learners. This shows that they are not free and there is no open freedom of speech for learners.

This point is supported by the fact that those elected are warned even before they start participating that they need not raise complaints but their part is to conform to the rules and regulations stipulated by members of school governance. Their role is so limited that as a result the learner's voice is unheard. ***“The TLO makes them to be fully aware of the fact that those learners who are elected to represent other learners are not there to raise complaints of the dissatisfaction all the time” (PA).***

After they have been elected they are further intimidated and excluded by parents. There is a feeling among parents that learners need not be informed of everything going on as they are regarded as children. This shows that although the principal is saying that they do engage and deliberate well, they are not engaged or taken seriously. ***“Parents sometimes complain that they are children they do not need to know everything and sometimes parents feel that learners are learners, they should study books” (PA).***

In relation to what I am arguing for in this study, deliberative democracy is not present in this school. Learners are not taken seriously as the only role that is seen to be directly linked to them is that of preventing crime, fighting and absenteeism and enforcing punctuality, which to my understanding is not part of why they are stakeholders in school governance. Another point is that sometimes they are left out deliberately or not even invited when some decisions are taken, which shows that decisions are taken without any form of consensus. ***“Not always, it depends. I feel it is not good to invite learners in issues like educator misbehaviour and educator conflicts as these might affect the dignity of the educator towards learners. Some issues should be confidential to the school management team and the parent body of the SGB” (PA).***

4.6.2 Summary implications and theory linkages for school B

In school B very little is done to make a positive move towards engaging or involving learners in the structure of governance. What can be applauded is the fact that learners are given freedom with no intimidation during the election of their office bearers. Communication, according to the principal, flows smoothly among all members of school governance, but not always, it depends. ***“The learners are elected in a democratic way because they are given an***

opportunity to choose whom they feel will represent them in the school governing body" (PB).

However, in this school learners are not taken seriously, they are excluded and are not seen as equal partners to other stakeholders. They are excluded because of age and are seen as having no positive contribution in the structure of governance. ***"The learners are shy to talk in a meeting, maybe this is due to age or they feel insecure" (PB).***

The silence of learners is viewed as their major barrier and there is no indication that help is being given to rectify the situation. Educators seemed happy to see them being quiet as they are perceived as shy and insecure. ***"They are voiceful on issues like sport and social activities. When it comes to educational related issues they seem passive"***. Stakeholders do not trust each other. I believe that where there is no trust there won't be any progress as each stakeholder is trying to protect him/herself from the others.

The principal herself does not feel comfortable in the presence of learners and does not fully support them. ***"When there are critical issues, irregularities on the teacher's side, the parent component is reluctant to involve the learner component nursing their insecurity or lack of technical handling of the matter [of] concern" (PB).*** Even when they try to raise some points their input is not accepted. This is the kind of school where learner democratic participation is not regarded as valuable. There is a lot of injustice going on in the school and deliberation is far from ideal.

4.6.3 Summary implications and theory linkages for school C

School C is similar to school A and B. The principal believes that learner participation is a good idea but that he is being hindered in his endeavours by other stakeholders who do not take kindly to learners. ***"Parents and teachers***

are treated equally but it's not always the case with learners, not always because some decisions are taken without them" (PC).

Engagement of learners is not there at all. Their involvement depends on the subject matter for that particular day. ***"Sometimes they do but it always depends on the subject matter" (PC).*** Moreover, learners' freedom is being compromised by educators because learners are not given equal access to information. Age exclusion dominates school governance. What is happening in this school shows lack of democratic participation. Although inclusion is of paramount importance in school governance it is lacking in reality in this school.

4.6.4 Summary implications and theory linkages for school D

There are positive elements for democratic participation that take place in school D. Learners are given opportunities to participate although on a limited scale. ***"When actual decisions are to be taken they do not vote but conduct proper consultation and hearings, but the principal concludes this sentence by saying if needs be" (PD).*** There are signs of inclusion, and democracy is taking place as learners' voices are taken into consideration. When asked about the person who actually takes decisions in the school governance his response is, ***"the chairperson" (PD).***

However, just like at other schools, in some instances learners are not treated like other stakeholders. ***"Well, if the items are not delicate to elders' behaviour" (PD).*** This is not a good sign for democratic participation as learners are not being engaged.

4.6.5 Summary implications and theory linkages for school E

Principal E suggests that learners' voices are not taken into consideration and are not heard in the school as the principal complains that learners are only looking for faults and that they like to criticise. Just as in the other schools, learners do

not play a positive role in school governance. ***“Some members go drunk, they insult and behave rudely towards learners, and they lose interest in such meetings” (PE).*** This is not a good sign. For school governance to be inclusive all members including learners need to be allowed to deliberate, argue and criticise other members including themselves. Overall in terms of practice democratic participation is not taking place. ***“We involve them because it is a government policy. Sometimes Yes, sometimes No, and Yes, if reasonable. Children will always be children, we do not say yes to everything they want” (PE).***

The summary explications from educators’ focus group discussion follows. There are many commonalities from the data from the principals of schools.

4.7 Educators

4.7.1 Summary implications and theory linkages for school A

Democratic participation by educators in the school is not taken seriously, for example they do not hide the fact that they are not keen about learners taking decisions with parents and themselves. They feel that when crucial decisions are to be taken, they do not need learners, by so doing they admit that learners’ input is not always taken into consideration and seriously. ***“They do not always attend meetings because parents and some adults believe that the SGB committee is only meant for adults. Sometimes learners are not even invited to meetings when their input and participation is not needed.”***

Freedom of speech is compromised by not letting learners elect their own representatives, for example educators believe that learners should not be given an opportunity to elect themselves but instead they should be elected by educators and the school management team. ***“Learners, who are to be***

elected to be members of the SGB, are elected by educators and one member of the school management team (SMT) in our school.” Among the reasons they mention is that learners do not choose according to abilities and skills but instead choose those they prefer most even if he/she is not good enough.

They do not hide the fact that there is no equality among stakeholders. *“No, learners are not given equal access to information like other stakeholders. They are inexperienced and they do not know what is expected of them.”* They feel that learners are not given equal access to information as they are inexperienced and do not know what is expected of them.

They regret the fact that learners sometimes show a lack of interest in what is being discussed. They feel that learners absent themselves from attending meetings just because they do not find matters that are being discussed challenging and interesting.

Other stakeholders such as parents view themselves as superior to the other members of school governance. Educators feel that parents monopolise the SGB structure as belonging to adults and see it as no place for children. They feel that learners should be left out of the SGB meetings because they are not intellectually and emotionally ready to carry the burden of school governance. As a result learners are excluded on the basis of age. This has cultural implications. In a black community children are not supposed to speak when the adult is speaking, or be in the same room when adults are discussing important matters unless they are invited or are the subject of discussion. That is why learners are perceived as children by both parents and educators.

Learners' rights are compromised at the school as educators feel that learners' input and participation is not needed as such. Educators put the blame on parents as they feel that it is them (parents) who view learners as having too many rights. ***"Parents believe that children have too many rights, which are the cause of disciplinary problems in the school, but educators and the principal regard it as their duty to bring learners on board."*** They blame learners' rights as the cause of ill discipline among learners. They believe that too many rights hinder school progress and good governance.

They feel that communication is good as circulars are sent before an SGB meeting. Learners exclude themselves, according to educators, and cite reasons such as the length of time the meetings take as a possible reason that contributes to absenteeism of learners. ***"We are not very keen about learners taking decisions with parents and teachers."*** Educators also feel that there is no attempt being made to empower learners. ***"There is no development and growth that I can say I notice is taking place to those learners who are part of SGB."***

I can say at this point that the infringements of rights are undemocratic and here in South Africa rights are protected by a constitution.

4.7.2 Summary implications and theory linkages for school B

In school B educators' responses reveal that there is minimal democratic participation going on in the structure of school governance. Educators mostly contradicted themselves as they were trying to hide the fact that they are not participating equally with other stakeholders. They say they do not have any particular criteria, but at the same time maintain that they need learners who are not shy but are well-behaved, clever and diligent.

They feel that they have no problem with communication. ***“Learners are allowed to take the kind of decisions that benefit them.”*** They give their learners equal access to information just like other stakeholders, but at the same time they agree that learners do not attend all meetings except those that directly affect them. For this study the inclusion of learners is of paramount importance, and if this is not done it follows that no participation can be achieved. ***“Learners do not attend all meetings; they attend those meetings that will only benefit them.”***

The involvement of learners is minimal. Educators are more comfortable with learners being present in the SGB meetings if there are no crucial issues, such as teacher confrontation, to be discussed on that particular day. They feel that learners are allowed to take the kind of decisions that benefit them. They do not experience any problems or misunderstandings as decisions are taken through consultation. They finish the sentence using the words ‘where necessary’, and this raised suspicion. ***“Learners are only involved when decisions involve learner issues and not parent and teacher issues. When decisions are crucial for example, learners are not allowed to attend and usually they are not involved.”***

Learners are deliberately excluded in some meetings as educators feel that they do not need learners when there are matters affecting educators and parents. They maintain that when decisions are crucial learners should not attend. They feel that learners are given their chance to deliberate and argue, especially if what they say is constructive and will also benefit all learners in the school as a whole. This shows that there are meetings and decisions taken without the involvement of learners.

They feel that learners are given their chance to deliberate and argue especially if what they say is constructive and will also benefit all learners in the school as a

whole. ***“Learners are allowed to oppose decisions but if they do they must come up with a solution.”*** They also feel that learners who are part of school governance are benefiting as they continue to develop and grow. To me this is not the kind of deliberation which is expected from all stakeholders. Educators put the blame on the South African Schools Act and departmental officials for problems in school governance. This shows without any doubt that learners are not fully welcomed in the structure of governance. ***“The Department of Education officials need to intervene and speak out to parents, teachers and learners about the importance of working together at all times.”***

4.7.3 Summary implications and theory linkages for school C

Freedom of speech is also limited in school C. Educators feel that learners should not elect each other as that duty should be left for educators to perform. ***“In this school learners do not elect one another, it is the duty of educators to elect them.”*** They maintain that they do not have any kind of criteria they use when choosing learners. For democratic participation to take place learners are expected to choose their own representatives and not be guided by educators. From the very beginning this shows that democratic participation is being compromised at this school.

The exclusion of learners is obvious at this school. ***“To tell you an honest truth, learners are not given a chance to exercise democracy, as they are not even always been informed of all the meetings.”*** Educators feel that learners are not given a chance to exercise their democratic rights in school governance. They acknowledge the fact that they are sometimes not even informed of pending meetings. ***“There are no frequent meetings of school governance, they only happen from time to time. But, when it comes to***

learners, they attend meetings when there is an issue or a need that involves them."

They accept that learners do not perform a meaningful role in school governance as they are not given enough chance to do so. They agree that there is no atmosphere of sameness that prevails in their structure of governance, as members do not treat each other as equal partners. ***"Learners are not always present when meetings are conducted because sometimes SGB meetings are held during school hours and those educators who are not members of school governance will be teaching at the time."***

They accept the fact that there are not frequent SGB meetings, but maintain that learners attend the meetings when there is an issue pertaining to them. ***"We all agree that we do not need children when crucial decisions are to be taken."*** However, they are happy with the fact that learners are decision-makers together with parents and educators. According to them this proves that they adhere to democratic principles and practices. They also feel that there are times when people do not see eye to eye, but they say that a final decision is taken by all stakeholders after members vote on the issue.

They acknowledge the fact that learners are not always present during SGB meetings as sometimes meetings are held during school hours when those educators who are not part of school governance are busy teaching. They treat learners as children and as a result of this, they say they do not need children when crucial decisions are taken. They take decisions without the participation of learners. ***"Learners when it comes to arguments and discussions, they just became passive, as they do not want to share their ideas in the presence of adults."*** They feel that they take them seriously but they have problems with other stakeholders who do not want to confront each other openly.

In this school no equal participation of stakeholders takes place. Educators feel that there is no exchange of ideas among members. They have problems with learners as they do not want to argue, they say that learners come and just sit quietly and are passive instead of being active participants. They are not sure whether there are any signs of development in those learners who are part of the SGB, but they are confident of their gaining valuable skills such as leadership and communication. ***“I can’t say there is development because they do not even attend all meetings. But, I can say they gain valuable skills such as leadership and communication.”***

They feel that learners are not given any kind of training. ***“There is no kind of training that learners are expected to undergo.”*** They feel that it is one of the duties of the school to reveal among learners the income and expenditure, more especially towards the end of the year. Equality of stakeholders is far from being realised by educators in this school.

4.7.4 Summary implications and theory linkages for school D

There is no equality of opportunity afforded to learners in this school and no freedom of speech. ***“The learners from grade 8 upwards elect one another, and the teacher liaison officer guides learners during election. The liaison officer does that in order to build a trusting relationship with the representative council of learners.”*** Educators maintain that learners elect one another in the presence of the teacher liaison officer (TLO). They justified their behaviour by saying that the only involvement of the TLO is to build a trusting relationship with those who will eventually be elected. They say that not only the TLO is present during election but an SMT member also makes herself/himself available so as to promote communication.

Furthermore they maintain that the duty of an SMT member is to encourage regular participation of learners in the SGB meetings and to promote respect for learners towards parents, educators and fellow learners. For me the principles of democracy are compromised in this school. There is no fair representation among stakeholders. ***“In our school governance, we have five parents, two educators and one learner who form part of the SGB team in this school. They have a duty to create mutual respect, good manners and morality among learners.”*** Their school governance is constituted as follows: five parents, two educators and one learner.

The elected stakeholders have a duty to create mutual respect, good manners and morality among learners. They feel that this is a fair number as all the required stakeholders are present. I realise that fairness is required for members to work together and to avoid conflict, but the question, is how fair is fair in this context? The educators feel that all stakeholders are given equal access because they all attend meetings convened for SGB purposes. When choosing the RCL members they need learners whom they believe are critical thinkers, visionary and supportive. ***“In our school, we need learners who are critical thinkers, visionary learners and supportive learners.”*** They feel that educators treat learners with respect but they are sceptical of parent treatment towards learners. The problem here is that there is no indication that they are trying to solve the problem.

Cultural practices are also visible in the school governance practices. Educators believe that parents cling to the past, having been influenced by societal practices on how to treat children. They feel that in their own society, children will always be children no matter what happens. ***“In our society, children will always be children, and are not allowed to speak when parents or adults are speaking, in fact they are not even supposed to be in the room when adults are speaking, unless they are invited.”*** They are not

allowed to say a word in the presence of parents or adults, especially when there is an issue to be discussed. In fact they are not even allowed to be in the same room as adults unless they are involved in the matter being discussed.

There are positive elements of democratic participation in the school. Educators feel that during the SGB meetings all stakeholders including learners are given a fair chance to deliberate and negotiate in an open discussion. ***“All SGB members tolerate and respect one another and the vote is being taken as a measure to decide on the matter.”*** They believe that they take decisions after consulting all stakeholders, and when all of them have arrived at a consensual decision. They feel that members tolerate one another and they take a vote so as to verify and to arrive at a fair decision for all. They maintain that even if decisions are to be taken, by law and by virtue of being part of the team, learners need to be present. They are happy with the fact that power and decision-making is being shared and there is learner representivity in all matters. They also feel that learners are able to negotiate and are able to make their input felt.

Learners' input is respected as they are allowed to ask questions and they are listened to. Educators feel that learners have the power to oppose or support an idea. ***“Learners have a power to oppose or support an idea.”*** This is a positive sign that shows elements of democratic participation are being adhered to by school governance representatives. Here learners are used mostly with regard to issues such as late coming of their classmates and for uniform policies of the school. They feel that learners are being empowered especially with skills such as communication, listening, sharing and planning. They feel that communication is good and every stakeholder is kept informed. They feel that learners who are members of the SGB are ready to be future leaders and this is a positive sign. ***“We empower them on skills such as communication skills, listening, power sharing, planning and many others.”***

4.7.5 Summary implications and theory linkages for school E

School C is not different from other schools in the treatment of learners in the structure of school governance. The educators here are not confident whether the SGB is able to solve problems in their school. ***“We are not sure whether our SGB is able to solve problems in our school.”*** They feel that learners are not given a chance, but they are in the school governance for the sake of being there, just to grace the SGB. ***“In my school learners are not given a chance, they are in the governing body just for the sake of being there to make the required number needed.”***

Educators say they do not have any criteria that they use for the election of learner representatives on the SGB, but at the same time they also say that learners do not elect themselves but are elected by an SMT member. ***“There is no criterion that is followed during the election of learner representative council, but learners are elected by the school management team.”*** Although they say they do not have criteria for election of RCL members, they make sure that there is a boy and a girl, which appears to be criteria. The educators feel that this is not a fair number, given that there are three parents, three educators and two learners. They themselves feel that considering the number of learners in the school, learners should be in the majority on the SGB. ***“I do not believe this is a fair number as learners are in the majority if we are to consider the number of learners in the school as a whole”. There are three parents, three educators and two learners – a boy and a girl. The boy reports to the boys and a girl reports to the girls.”***

There is no inclusive participation of all stakeholders. Educators feel that in most cases learners are left out of decision-making. They feel that learners do not contribute much during the meetings as they just sit idly and do nothing to

contribute to the discussions. ***“In most cases, learners are left out. They do not have a say in the meetings, they sit and smile. In some meetings they are not even invited.”*** Because of this lack of inclusivity in the school governance, no one is prepared to help involve learners because they are not regarded as equal partners by other stakeholders.

They say that there is a person who is tasked to report to the learners who are members of the SGB when they are absent from meetings, so that they can report back to learners about decisions taken during their absence. ***“If some decisions are taken, there is someone who is tasked to report to them so as to report back to other learners.”*** I believe this should not be done this way as learners are also decision-makers in the structure of governance. Educators feel that learners are being isolated and they are confident that the learners do not see themselves as part of the SGB. They feel that there is no difference in the way that parents and educators treat the learners. They say that learners are called after the closure of the meeting as they are not supposed to be there when issues are discussed. They feel that decisions at the school are taken by parents and educators most of the time. They feel that when learners are eventually present they will sit and be silent as if they are dead. There is no consensus among members, and as a result there is a lack of social transformation on the part of learners. ***“Parents and educators treat them similarly. They call the learners after the meeting and tell them what they have decided on, without them being involved in decision-making.”***

Exclusion on grounds of age is dominant in the school. Educators feel that learners are treated as kids, as kids are not supposed to take any kind of decision. They say that learners are given a chance to take decisions in matters such as sport, tours or farewell functions. ***“They are taken as kids and are not supposed to take decisions unless it is in sport, tours and farewell***

functions, which they are allowed to organise.” Educators feel that the treatment given to learners is not fair, and that learners do not stand a chance in the structure of school governance. Most of the time, according to educators, learners would not make any suggestions, but will agree on what is arrived at in the meeting. ***“I do not think this is fair, because they are not given a chance to oppose.”***

Educators also feel that learners are not given a platform to deliberate on matters. They feel that other stakeholders have a negative attitude towards learners, and as a result their involvement is not taken seriously. ***“Most of the time there are no suggestions that come from learners, but if I give you my own opinion I think there is no room to say a thing for them. They just agree on what the educators and parents say.”***

They feel that learners just grace the occasion to show that they are represented. ***“The other stakeholders have a negative attitude towards them and their involvement is not taken seriously.”*** Moreover, educators feel that there is no kind of training given to learners who are part of the SGB, and they are not even supported. They say that learners themselves know that they are not being taken seriously. ***“I never heard of any training given to them. They are not even supported.”*** They feel that learners are not even informed of the meetings as letters are only written and directed to parents.

I conclude that it is clear that democratic participation in school governance is lacking at this school, and this further confirms the problem statement for this particular study. I now move on to journal entries of learners.

4.8 Summary implications and theory linkages for learner responses

Judging from the responses of learners I could easily say deliberative democratic school governance is very possible if learners could be taken seriously by other members of school governance. For example, in contrast to what has been said so far, learners are very positive and optimistic about the future of school governance and their role as decision-makers. The following statements from learners show that they are more positive about the importance of the structure of governance in school:

I believe that the SGB is an effective initiative and it will benefit the education system. It only needs co-operation from all the aspects of the school, teachers, learners and students.

Another learner offered the following positive response:

I have benefited. It has given me some responsibility and I have learnt skills on how to handle it. I encourage others to participate in the future, because I believe it will create a better learning environment. It will bring students, teachers and parents closer, for the benefit of the school.

The above response shows that learners are more visionary than their educators about the structure of school governance. They feel much more strongly about recruiting some of their members to participate as SGB members. They also wish for the SGB to go from strength to strength, but, having heard the responses of educators, I am not sure whether this is possible or not. Relating learner responses to the framework of this study supports what is being advocated by all

the theorists who have been used to support my argument for meaningful participation of learners in school governance, and this is a positive move. Although principals and educators do not see the importance of democratic participation, learners on the other hand are willing to be engaged when decisions are taken in their schools.

Using the findings revealed above by means of summary implications and theory linkages I now present the summary of findings for this chapter.

4.9 Conclusion and Summary of Findings

Although learners show signs of positive participation as stakeholders in school governance, educators are not very eager to accept them as participants in the structure. Various non-participatory measures kept on surfacing in each school. Based on the facts from summary implications and theory linkages, findings could be summarised as follows: Learner democratic participation and experience in school governance is characterised by lack of freedom, lack of equality, lack of fair opportunities, manipulation of individual rights, lack of free development of all members, domination of social and cultural traditions, manipulation, deception, coercion, illegitimate decision-making, misuse of the majority rule principle and, to my surprise, by confidence and visionary expectation of learners in school governance and beyond. These are the important themes that are carried over to the next chapter.

The situated description given above is, in a sense, a summary or distillation of the meanings conveyed and captured in the themes. These areas or themes run concurrently from principals, educators and learners and they have emerged strongly. Since I was not presenting a general description, this description formed the basis of further data analysis and commentary that will follow, backed up by the deliberative theorists discussed in previous chapters. In the next chapter I closely analyse these findings, looking for meanings in the text

using a deconstructive technique in order to find the existing gaps in the structure of school governance. Textual analysis is done in order to reveal logical or rhetorical incompatibilities between the explicit and implicit planes of discourse in a text and to demonstrate by means of a range of critical techniques how these incompatibilities are disguised and assimilated by the text.

CHAPTER 5

DECONSTRUCTIVE CRITIQUE: POST CRITICAL INQUIRY

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to firstly introduce and make use of the ideas of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida and his philosophical practices regarding the interpretation of texts, sometimes known as deconstructive critique, in order to identify existing gaps in the structure of school governance. By the term 'deconstructive critique' I do not have in mind merely stinging criticism, but rather specific techniques and philosophical ideas that Derrida and his followers have applied to various texts. These techniques often involve teasing out the hidden messages in our language and thought, and that is primarily how I came to be interested in this deconstructive technique for this particular chapter.

Derrida's work is not concerned with the privileging of certain social groups over others (although it can be so applied), but with privileging of certain ideas over others, for example, I do not intend privileging learners over educators in any way. But what interests me most about Derrida's work is the possibility that deconstruction can be used to shed some light on theories of ideological thinking, on how participants in this study form and use ideologies, either consciously or unconsciously, in this school governance discourse. It is for these reasons that, in the exploration of the findings, I elected to employ a deconstructive technique.

Secondly, I interpret and comment on the data using the existing literature and theories from previous chapters to help reveal and bring out the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of participants regarding democratic participation of learners in schools as revealed by the participants. Themes that emerged from

the previous chapter formed the basis of the analysis. It transpired, for example, that learner democratic participation and experience in school governance is characterised by lack of freedom, lack of equality, lack of fair opportunities, manipulation of individual rights, lack of free development of all members, domination of social and cultural traditions, manipulation, deception, coercion, illegitimate decision-making, misuse of the majority rule principle and lastly by the positive attitude and visionary expectations of learners in the structure of school governance. These are the themes to be deconstructed in view of how the respondents perceived democratic participation and what possible roots the data follow in relation to deliberative democratic school governance.

Finally, the last section of this chapter suggests that deliberative democratic school governance is the way to go and should be practised in schools for better and inclusive school governance. The themes that emerged from chapter 4 revealed that the deliberative democratic school governance I had argued for (see especially the theory chapter and chapter 4 findings) is not practised in schools and in the structure of school governance. Therefore, in my concluding section I suggest a deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) model because it can challenge the prevailing views that perpetuate exclusion, that fail to identify leadership and governance qualities of those who are in the minority, and of those who are in a lower and sometimes marginalised hierarchical position such as learners.

At this introductory phase it is worth mentioning that deliberative democratic school governance is a new model that was introduced for this study and that it could be adopted to solve the existing problem(s) of minimal democratic participation in school governance. I begin by discussing post-structuralism, the philosophical movement of the 20th century which studies the structures and systems behind observable social and cultural phenomena, and is a system that gave birth to a deconstructive critique.

5.1.1 Post-Structuralism: literary criticism

Roederer and Moellendorf (2004) believe that the term post-structuralism was developed during the 1960s by French critics like Barthes²² and transmitted to the English speaking literary departments of North America via the early writings of Jacques Derrida (Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 359). They maintain that post-structuralists suggested that language and text are much more than merely the passive medium through which a speaker or author tries to convey a message. In the post-structuralist approach to textual analysis, the reader replaces the systematic aspect of language, which works as the underpinning structure of the individual instance of speech and writing. Moreover, they assert that language and texts have their own structural dynamic which operates independently, or behind the back as it were, of any speaker or author (Roederer & Moellendorf 2004: 359).

It is also maintained that post-structuralism developed out of the work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) who saw language as a superficial system of signs cloaking deep underlying principles. Selden (1986) says:

It is possible to see the beginnings of a post-structuralist counter-movement even in Saussure's linguistic theory. As we have seen, *langue* replaces the author as the primary subject of inquiry (Selden 1986: 72).

²² Barthes was undoubtedly the most entertaining, witty, and daring of the French theorists of the 1960s and 1970s. His career took several turns, but preserved a central theme: the conventionality of all forms of representation. He defines literature as "a message of the signification of things and not their meaning". "Signification" refers to the process which produces the meaning, and not to the meaning itself. Barthes also believed that the structuralist method could explain all the sign-systems of human culture (Selden 1986: 74).

By grounding his theory in the arbitrary nature of the sign, Saussure affirmed that there is no intrinsic, organic, or motivated reason for signifying a particular concept by means of a particular word; the meaning of a word is arbitrary but agreed upon by social convention, hence words acquire value or identity. For this reason, it is believed that, both historically and methodologically, deconstruction as a form of critical reading is related to the advent of post-structuralism, and each of the post-structural methods that emerged has sought to compensate for the neglect by structuralists of important elements of literary study, such as the roles of the reader, the author and the function of ideology.

To mention but a few post-structuralist examples, Michael Foucault was a structuralist and later a post-structural theorist noted for his examination of the codes by which societies operate. Foucault used deconstructive criticism to analyse power relationships. In *The Birth of the Prison* (1991), for example, Foucault theorises that institutions such as asylums, hospitals, and prisons are society's devices for exclusion and that by surveying social attitudes in relation to these institutions one can examine the development and uses of power. Nevertheless, recently, the style of modern French philosophical writers, such as Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault and Jacques Derrida was designed to challenge that paradigm of "proper" philosophical expression.

Post-structuralism was also referred to as literary criticism mostly because although Derrida, one of the proponents of deconstructive technique, is a philosopher his work has been applied mainly to problems of literary criticism, and it is literary critics and scholars who write much of the literature on deconstruction. This view is supported by Roederer and Moellendorf (2004) who maintain that post-structuralism influenced literary criticism. According to them postmodern culture has given rise to a new understanding of language and written texts and those practices founded on their interpretation, such as literary criticism. In their endeavour to explain this phenomenon, post-structural

theorists maintain that deconstructive critique (post-structuralism) is an umbrella term that came into use in the 1970s and covered several approaches to literary criticism. It is further maintained that post-structuralism exposes the discourse as conceptually incoherent or contradictory. Lather (1991) is of the opinion that:

Poststructuralism (deconstructive scrutiny) helps us to ask questions about what we have not thought to think, about what is most densely invested in our discourses/practices, about what has been muted, repressed, unheard in our liberatory efforts. It helps us to define the politics implicit in our critical practices and move toward understanding the shortcomings of theories of political transformation (Lather 1991: 156).

Post-structuralists such as Lather reject the idea of a literary text having one purpose, one meaning or one singular existence. For them a post-structuralist critic must be able to utilise a variety of perspectives to create a multifaceted, perhaps even conflicting, interpretation of a text. For them, it is particularly important to analyse how the meanings of a text shift in relation to certain variables, usually involving the identity of the reader. Moreover, they reject the notion that there is a consistent structure to texts.

Instead, post-structuralists advocate deconstruction, the premise of which claims that the meanings of texts and concepts constantly shift in relation to variables. The only way to properly understand these meanings is to deconstruct the assumptions and knowledge systems, which produce the illusion of singular meaning. They also believe that in order to understand an object, or one of the meanings of a text, it is necessary to study both the object itself and the systems of knowledge, which coordinated to produce the object. This process was termed deconstruction by Derrida. Deconstructivist architecture attempts to find new solutions without the constraints of structure, functional and thematic

hierarchies. Instead of searching vainly for truth, Derrida believes that philosophy should 'deconstruct' the way meaning is created in words.

Before moving on to discuss the deconstructive approach, I need to relate the relationship of post-structuralism to this study and more especially for school governance.

As I have already constructed a text to be deconstructed in this chapter, certain post-structural concepts have to be borne in mind, such as language used by participants, to convey messages in relation to school governance and democratic participation of learners in school governance. It is also of vital importance for me not to forget the language I used when writing the final text. Some participants might have been more eloquent than others in presenting their side of the story while others might have been very shallow in presenting their case. Some other participants might have used language to deceive the field worker and this is the place to look carefully at the text for misleading or hidden messages.

This means that, as suggested by post-structuralists, the roles of the reader, the author and the function of ideology are of paramount importance here. It is also of major importance to understand that the meanings of texts and concepts constantly shift in relation to interpretation. The only way to properly understand these meanings is to deconstruct the assumptions and knowledge systems which produce the illusion of singular meaning. Post-structuralists have taught us to reject the idea of a literary text having one purpose, one meaning or one singular existence.

5.1.2 The rationale for a deconstructive approach

Deconstructivism is a term which is based on the literary and philosophical theories of Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher who deconstructed literary

texts in search of contradictory or hidden meanings. It is believed that Derrida invented both the term deconstruction and the method in the 1960s and early 1970s. In his works, he offers a way of reading texts, called deconstruction, which enables the reader to make explicit the metaphysical and *a priori* assumptions, which are used even by those philosophers who are most deeply critical of metaphysics. Derrida's coinage in the 1960s has subsequently become synonymous with a particular method of textual analysis and philosophical argument involving the close reading of works of literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis, linguistics and anthropology.

According to Derrida, textual analysis is done in order to reveal logical or rhetorical incompatibilities between the explicit and implicit planes of discourse in a text and to demonstrate by means of a range of critical techniques how these incompatibilities are disguised and assimilated by the text. Derrida's views are supported by Howells (1998) who maintains that whenever a word or concept purports to have a final unified meaning, deconstructive analysis reveals that there is always more to be said, that something is left out. Madison (1993: 1) also argues that texts demand to be read, and to read a text is, in effect, to produce another text.

Furthermore, Madison maintains that reading is writing and this is what is called interpretation. In his explanation of a deconstructive analysis of a text, he is supported by Norris (1982) who views deconstruction as an activity of reading which remains closely tied to the text it interrogates, and which can never be set up independently as a self-enclosed system of operative concepts. Theorists such as Balkin (1995) supported by Derrida and Norris maintain that deconstructive analysis often emphasises the importance of context in judgement, and that the many changes in meaning accompany changes in contexts of judgement.

The idea is supported fully by Burbules and Warnick (2004: 5) who assert that deconstruction involves an ideological or a deconstructive critique of a term or concept, identifying internal contradictions or ambiguities in uses of the term and/or a disclosure of partisan effects the term has in popular discourses. This description comprises a number of different related possibilities. What they have in common is disclosing the biases and distortions built into conventional discourses: their purpose is to put such terms under suspicion and to question them (and possibly to change those usages). Whenever a word or concept purports to have a final, unified meaning, deconstructive analysis reveals that there is always more to be said. Something is always left out, and this lack is rarely innocent.

Balkin (1995), further argues that deconstructive analyses closely study the figural and rhetorical features of texts to see how they interact with or comment upon the arguments made in that text. According to him, the deconstructor should look for unexpected relationships between different parts of that text, or loose threads or gaps that at first glance appear peripheral yet often turn out to undermine or confuse the argument.

Balkin (1985) elaborates further by stating that the deconstructor may consider the multiple meanings or key words in a text, the relationships between words, and even exploit different meanings to show how the text speaks with different (and often conflicting) voices. He further maintains that behind these techniques is a more general probing and questioning of familiar oppositions between philosophy (reason) and rhetoric, or between the literal and the figural. Yet, although we often see a text as merely supplementary and peripheral to the underlying logic of its argument, closer analysis often reveals that metaphor, figure, and rhetoric play an important role in reasoning.

Derrida's theory of 'deconstruction' is also viewed as an attempt to take apart an idea or system to show what has been excluded. This means that the goal of a deconstructionist reading is to seek out the contradictions in the text to prove that the text lacks unity and coherence. The point is not really to show that the text means the opposite of what it is supposed to mean, but that there can be no actual interpretation of the text. Such an idea is further supported by Balkin (1995) who posits that, in the process of deconstructive analysis, the text meanings should be viewed as inherently unstable. Furthermore, they maintain that deconstruction supports the notion that social structures are contingent and social meanings are malleable and fluid. Moreover, they assert that deconstruction is able to show that texts can undermine their own logic and can have multiple meanings that conflict with each other. They also argue that deconstruction can be used for showing that particular arguments are fundamentally incoherent.

Selden (1986: 87) maintains that deconstruction can begin when we locate the moment when a text transgresses the laws it appears to set up for itself. According to Selden, texts go to pieces at this point. In support of this view, Balkin (1995) further explain that deconstructive analysis is a technique that looks for what is de-emphasised, overlooked, or suppressed in a particular way of thinking or in a particular set of policies or documents. They also maintain that sometimes techniques may explore how suppressed or marginalised principles return to make new appearances.

The above theorists gave an example from the field of law, where a document of law is thought to be organised around a dominant principle. In this case, the deconstructor looks for exceptional or marginal counter principles that have an unacknowledged significance, and which, if taken seriously, might displace the dominant principle. Nevertheless, although deconstruction is primarily applied to

the written word, some practitioners use deconstructive techniques to analyse concepts, systems and institutions focusing on speech and writing.

Secondly, one of Derrida's clearest examples of a deconstructive reading of texts concerns the relation between speech and writing. Selden (1986) has this to say:

Speech seems nearer to originating thought. When we hear speech, we attribute to it a 'presence', which we take to be lacking in writing. The speech of the great orator or politician is thought to possess 'presence', it incarnates, so to speak, the speaker's soul (Selden 1986: 85).

In regard to writing Selden has this to say:

Writing seems relatively impure and obtrudes its own system in physical marks, which have a relative permanence. Writing can be repeated, printed, re-printed, and so on, and this repetition invites interpretation and re-interpretation (Selden 1986: 85).

In his ideas about speech and writing Derrida is supported by Johnson (1993) who writes as follows:

The Greek word *logos* implicitly associates the faculty of speech with the ideal of reason and rationality. The spoken word, the *phone* or voice, is considered to enjoy a closer proximity to the inner 'truth' of the subject's consciousness, intuition and presence to him or herself (Johnson 1993: 66).

The above quote confirms that Derrida approaches this problem by confirming historically the priority of the voice over the letter. According to Johnson (1993),

speech is immediate, self-present, and authentic in that a speaker who hears and understands him or herself in the moment of speaking utters the 'truth'. As for Derrida, by contrast, writing is the copy of speech and is therefore derivative, marginal, and delayed. According to Selden (1986: 86), speech has full presence, while writing is secondary and threatens to contaminate speech with its materiality.

Having outlined a speech/writing hierarchy in this way, Derrida shows how Saussure's text inverts the hierarchy, giving priority to writing over speech. His ideas on inversion of hierarchies is taken further by Balkin (1995) who posits that the deconstructionist project involves the identification of hierarchical opposition, followed by a temporary reversal of the hierarchy. He believes that people should derive new insights when the privileging in a text is turned on its head. Selden (1986) further posits that Western philosophy has supported this ranking in order to preserve presence. However, he also agrees that the hierarchy can easily be undone and reversed. To complete the reversal of the hierarchy, one can say that speech is a species of writing. This reversal, according to Selden, is the first stage of a Derridean 'deconstruction'.

This coupling of writing and speech is an example of what Derrida calls a "violent hierarchy" According to Burbules and Warnich (2004) Derrida's hierarchies of thought are everywhere and they can be found in the following assertions: A is the rule and B is the exception; A is the general case and B is the special case; A is simple and B is complex; A is normal and B is abnormal; A is self-supporting and B is parasitic upon it; A is present and B is absent; A is immediately perceived and B is inferred; A is central and B is peripheral; A is true and B is false; A is natural and B is artificial. According to him, the labelling of these ideas as A and B involves a hierarchical move because the letter A precedes B in the alphabet. Furthermore, for Derrida, any hierarchical statements about a set of ideas A and B is an invitation for a deconstructive reversal, to show that the

property we ascribe to A is true of B and the property we ascribe to B is true of A.

For Burbules and Warnich (2004) deconstruction will show that A's privileged status is an illusion, for A depends upon B as much as B depends upon A. He thus maintains that we will discover that B stands in relation to A much like we thought A stood in relation to B. He also maintains that it is possible to find in the very reasons that A is privileged over B the reasons that B is privileged over A and, having reversed the hierarchy, we will then be in a better position to see things about both A and B that we had never noticed before. For Derrida, any hierarchical opposition of ideas, no matter how trivial, can be deconstructed in this way, and he maintains that what is most simple, basic, or immediate is most real, true, foundational, or important.

In support of the above argument, Balkin (1995: 2) posits that one can deconstruct a privileging in several different ways and one can also explore how the reasons for privileging A over B may also apply to B, or how the reasons for B's subordinate status apply to A in unexpected ways. Furthermore, he believes that one may also consider how A depends upon B, or is actually a special case of B. According to Balkin, the goal of these exercises is to achieve a new understanding of the relationship between A and B, which, to be sure, is always subject to further deconstruction. According to him, it is true that having reversed this hierarchy, we could then show that difference cannot be a foundational term for metaphysics, but it depends upon identity as much as identity depends upon difference.

Derrida (1967) further argues that in a deconstructive approach the deconstructor looks for the ways in which one term in the opposition has been 'privileged' over the other in a particular text, argument, historical tradition or social practice. Taking this a little further, he maintains that one term may be

privileged because it is considered the general, normal, central case, while the other is considered special, exceptional, peripheral or derivative. According to him, something may also be privileged because it is considered truer, more valuable, more important, or more universal than its opposite. Moreover, because things can have more than one opposite, many different types of privileging can occur simultaneously.

Derrida further posits that the insertion of texts into new contexts continually produces new meanings that are both partly different from and partly similar to previous understandings; thus, there is a nested opposition between them. This theory proposes that there are certain theoretical and conceptual opposites, often arranged in a hierarchy, which structure a given text. Such binary pairs could include male/female, speech/writing, rational/emotional and many others.

Again, in trying to explain this idea further, Balkin (1995) uses Derrida's favourite example of the history of Western civilisation. According to Balkin, Derrida sees the theories of Western philosophers as expressing, at various times, a series of different metaphysical valuations: subject over object, normal over abnormal, good over evil, positive over negative, identity over difference, being over non-being, ideal over non-ideal. For him, Western philosophy has used the preferred concept as a ground for theorising and has explained the other concept in terms of it.

Balkin maintains that in each case, the preferred concept constitutes a belief in 'presence', a self-sufficient, immediately cognisable existence. He also asserts that Western civilisation has been marked by a bias in favour of speech over writing and he believes that people should investigate what it would be like if writing were more important than speech. Moreover, he asks people to attempt to see speech as a kind of writing, as ultimately parasitic upon writing and as a special case of writing rather than the other way around and, in so doing, he

asserts that we reverse the privileged position of speech over writing, and temporarily substitute it with a new priority. This new priority, according to Derrida, is not meant to be permanent, for it may in turn be reversed using identical techniques. The point here, according to Derrida, is not to establish a new conceptual bedrock, but rather to investigate what happens when the given, common sense arrangement is reversed.

At this point it is important to highlight the fact that the inversion of the hierarchy constitutes one half of a deconstruction and Derrida completes the procedure by showing how in Saussure's own terms both speech and writing are subsumed into a larger linguistic field in which all language, spoken and written, is constituted by difference rather than hierarchy. Thus, according to Derrida, those inferior, secondary qualities attributed to writing are seen to inhabit speech itself and difference has been there, too, all along. The privileging of speech and the repression of writing represent for Derrida a fundamental aspect of the logocentric²³ history of Western culture. According to Direk and Lawlor (2002: 90) deconstruction makes it possible to unknot this link between historical and logical limits and to reinscribe the apparently deviant cases in the very logical structure of the relation under analysis.

Thirdly, Derrida argues that language creates an idea of reality and refers to itself rather than to anything in the real world. This is because language refers to the position of the listener and the speaker, that is, to the contingency of their story. In order to deconstruct this hierarchical tradition of presence, Derrida elaborates Saussure's notion of linguistic difference. By so doing Derrida seeks to analyse language in an attempt to provide a radically alternative perspective in

²³ Selden (1986: 85) believes that a desire for a centre is called 'logocentrism' in Derrida's classic work, *On Grammatology*. 'Logos' (Greek for 'word') is a term which in the New Testament carries the greatest possible concentration of presence. Derrida argues that this privileging of speech over writing (he calls it 'phonecentism') is a classic feature of logocentrism.

which the basic notion of a philosophical thesis is called into question. In other words, deconstruction is a method of reading, which is based on the assumption that language is unreliable.

The concept of a linguistic system, for example, a text structured by difference, raises questions concerning preferentiality, meaning and representation in language. Instead of resting assured in the ability of the sign to embody meaning, or to refer simply and directly to an object existing in the outside world, a deconstructive interpreter such as Derrida affirms that there is nothing 'outside' the text and that meaning and reference must be constituted from within the system as functions of difference. Difference for Roederer and Moellendof (2004: 378) implies a hierarchy between two concepts, which can be ranked in order of importance or choice, for example ranking A over B. In this regard, Madison (1993) has this to say:

The absolute final law of language is, we dare say that there is nothing that ever resides in one term ... a is powerless to designate anything without the aid of b, and the same thing is true if b is without the aid of a ... both have no value ... other than through this same plexus of eternally negative differences (Madison 1993: 7).

Madison also maintains that what is different is always so called with reference to another thing. For him, differences are secondary derivative, relative to the more original 'self-identical beings' of a being. For Madison the principle of difference implies that languages function with all their familiar effectiveness without relying on any form of sign/non-sign opposition.

Fourthly, the concept of difference is crucial to Derrida. According to Selden (1986: 85), Derrida invents the term 'difference' to convey the divided nature of

the sign. He believes that *differance*²⁴ could be seen as plotting the linguistic limits of the subject. According to Roeder and Moellendorf (2004: 444) difference implies an undecideability or aporia²⁵ (as opposed to a hierarchy) between or within a dualism (like that between A and B or between law and justice).

According to the above philosophers Derrida uses difference to 'deconstruct' Western philosophy, which he argues is founded on a theory of 'presence', in which metaphysical notions such as truth, being and reality are determined in their relation to an ontological centre, essence, origin (*archè*), or end (*telos*) that represses absence and difference for the sake of metaphysical stability. The best-kept secret of Western metaphysics is thus the historical repression of difference through a philosophical vocabulary that favours presence in the form of voice, consciousness, and subjectivity.

Difference simultaneously indicates that (a) the terms of an oppositional hierarchy are differentiated from each other (which is what determines them), (b) each term in the hierarchy defers the other (in the sense of making the other term wait for the first term), and (c) each term in the hierarchy defers to the other (in the sense of being fundamentally dependent upon the other).

²⁴ Selden (1986: 85) asserts that in French, the in 'difference' is not heard, and so we hear only 'difference'. The ambiguity is perceptible only in writing: The verb '*differer*' means both 'to differ' and to 'differ' as a spatial concept: the sign emerges from a system of differences, which are spaced out within the system. Difference, in other words, is a combination of the meanings in the word *differance*. The concept means differer or differ, differance, which means to delay or postpone (defer), and the idea of difference itself. To oversimplify, words are always at a distance from what they signify and, to make matters worse must be described by using other words.

²⁵ The inherent contradiction found in any text. Derrida, for example, cites the inherent contradictions at work in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's use of the words culture and nature by demonstrating that Rousseau's sense of the self's innocence (in nature) is already corrupted by the concept of culture (and existence) and vice versa.

However, Roeder and Moellendorf warn us that Derrida does not simply want to reverse the old hierarchy point when he introduces the term difference (Roeder & Moellendorf 2004: 447). Deconstructive analysis in this case may then be used to attempt to explore how the above similarity or difference is suppressed or overlooked.

Derrida's point is that the privileging of presence may be found in everyday thought as much as in abstract philosophy. According to him, any system of thought that proceeds by marking out the fundamental, the essential, the normal, or the most important, in short, virtually any rational system can be analysed from the standpoint of a deconstructive practice. According to him, a deconstructive reading needs to focus on binary oppositions within a text: firstly, to show how those oppositions are structured hierarchically; secondly, to overturn that hierarchy temporarily, as if to make the text say the opposite of what it appeared to say initially; and thirdly, to displace and reassert both terms of the opposition within a non-hierarchical relationship of difference. According to Derrida, the deconstructionist may want to show that the notion of identity, which seems so basic, so 'present', actually depends upon the notion of difference. For him, self-identity depends upon difference because a thing cannot be identical to something unless it can be different from something else.

Identity for Derrida is only comprehensible in terms of difference, just as difference can only be understood in terms of identity. He believes that, by so doing, people have then just deconstructed the opposition identity/difference by showing the mutual dependence these ideas have upon each other. In addition, he believes that people have shown that what was thought to be foundational (identity) is itself dependent upon the concept it was privileged over (difference). According to Derrida, deconstruction always reveals difference within unity. Derrida suggests that the distinction between fact and fiction, good and evil, truth and falsity are no more than semantic differences or games with words. His

views on the deconstruction of texts have been widely criticised. Biesta and Kuehne (2001: 2), for example, believe that Derrida's deconstructionism has often been accused of being a form of critical analysis, which aims at tearing apart everything it finds in its way.

Relating deconstruction technique to this study on school governance, I would firstly like to align it to members of school governance who at the moment some stakeholders believe are more privileged than others. If they can realise that, as Derrida has put it, "A's privileged status is an illusion, for A depends upon B as much as B depends upon A", this will mean that each stakeholder depends upon another as they are all expected to work together for the benefit of the school. Looking down on or neglecting the contribution of one stakeholder shows that they are not fighting for a common goal i.e. a meaningful democratic participation.

Secondly, members of school governance need to guard against the language they use when deliberating in the structure of governance. They need to communicate using the simplest terms, for one member among them could easily use the same term in a negative way because there is nothing that ever resides in one term. In other words, deconstruction is a method of reading which is based on the assumption that language is unreliable. Members of school governance, according to Selden (1986: 86), need to take into consideration the fact that the speech has full presence, while writing is secondary and threatens to contaminate speech with its materiality. Through language and speech school governance members could better reason and in the process deliver rational communication.

Relating deconstruction to this study and more particular to this chapter when analysing the text in more depth, I am going to look for the ways in which one term in the text has been 'privileged' over the other or examine an argument

which has been used repeatedly to arrive at its hidden meaning. For example, from almost all stakeholders I have analysed they all agree that they do not involve learners when an important issue which they believe to be crucial is to be discussed. This statement to me has to be deconstructed as it might be carrying many different messages. Furthermore, after deconstructing the text I intend producing another text.

However deconstruction, just like other research methods, is not immune to criticism. But, before going that route, and without wishing to confuse my theoretical model, I would like to put the readers at ease by suggesting that (a) deconstruction does not show that all texts are meaningless, but rather that they are overflowing with multiple and often conflicting meanings, (b) deconstruction does not claim that concepts have no boundaries but that their boundaries can be parsed in many different ways as they are inserted into new contexts of judgement, (c) deconstructive arguments do not necessarily destroy conceptual oppositions or conceptual distinctions, rather they tend to show that conceptual oppositions can be reinterpreted as a form of nested opposition (Balkin 1995).

5.1.3 Critics of the deconstruction technique

As a method of literary critics, deconstruction has been identified largely with the work of certain critics at Yale University such as Geoffrey H. Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, and Paul de Man. Miller (2000), for example, claims that deconstruction is just good close reading and is not a method of analysis that a critic applies to a text. Furthermore, he maintains that deconstruction is something that the text has already done to itself and that every text is always already deconstructed, but what the critic does, then, is to repeat the text in his or her analysis. According to Miller the deconstructor repeats its rhetorical operations, its linguistic manoeuvres and its very difference and not because he is doing something new.

Madison (1993: 1) also maintains that Derrida's own texts are themselves mostly interpretations of the texts of others. For him, there is an essential 'parasiticity' (intertextuality, if one prefers) involved in the production of any text whatsoever, and this is nowhere more evident than in Derrida himself (Madison 1993: 1). According to him, interpreting Derrida poses special problems because of what Derrida called dissemination, because he himself appeared to give licence to any and all manner of interpretations of his own texts. In his characteristically liberal fashion Derrida wrote:

Perhaps the desire to write is the desire to launch things that come back to you as much as possible in as many forms as possible. That is, it is the desire to perfect a program or a matrix having the greatest potential variability, undecidability, plurivocality, et cetera; so that each time something returns it will be as different as possible. This is what one does when one has children – talking beings who can always outtalk you. You have the illusion that it comes back to you – that these unpredictable words come out of you somewhat. This is what goes on with text (in Madison 1993: 2).

Madison (1993: 2) maintains that Derrida himself has insisted that there are constraints in reading. As any experienced reader knows, while a good text will always have multiple meanings, it does not, and cannot, mean just anything at all. If the meaning of a text were not, to some degree or another, 'decidable', one could not even begin to 'deconstruct' it. Critics of deconstruction have also tended to focus on language as they assert that deconstruction is less an applied method than an intrinsic habit of language.

They believe that all texts, not just some texts or some periods of literature, can be deconstructed. They cite examples such as: if play, difference, the abyss, and the trace, for example, are the 'essence' of language, then there is no theoretical

reason why all discourse, literary and non-literary, romantic and modern, should not be subject to the radical forces of 'writing'. They also maintain that everything can be "put in question", that is, viewed as arbitrary, free-floating elements in a closed system of 'writing', with the result that previously settled assumptions of stability and coherence, both in words and in things, become radically shaken, even, as a number of critics have claimed, to the point of nihilism (Madison 1993).

Many of Derrida's critics have responded in markedly different ways. De Man's (1979) method of textual analysis, for example, resembles Derrida's in its recurrent effort to uncover hierarchical oppositions within texts and to reveal the linguistic and philosophical grounds upon which those hierarchies are built. Such a method, called a 'critique', seeks to make explicit what is implicit, assumed, repressed, or contradicted in a text. Thus de Man is less concerned to explicate themes than to show how rhetoric is 'thematized', that is, how the literal or narrative level of a text may repeat its figural substructure. Deconstruction for de Man involves the careful drawing out of those moments when what a text says seems at odds with the rhetoric in which it says it. Such moments are examples of what de Man (1979) calls 'undecidability' or 'unreadability', when questions of epistemology are suspended within rhetoric and ways of knowing are dependent on ways of saying.

The figure for such an impasse is known as *aporia*, or textual doubt, involving the mutual assertion and negation of opposing systems of logic or rhetoric. In an *aporia*, nothing can be harmonised, nor can it be wholly cancelled; any figure in question oscillates between contrary poles of discourse. For example, a text may lay claim to a certain figure of rhetoric – metaphor, perhaps – but if one reads carefully, de Man suggests, one will find that the privileged term or figure is part of a rhetorical hierarchy that depends on the repression of an opposing term – say, metonymy (Waters & Godzich 1989). However, the repression can never be

complete; indeed, the moment of deconstruction will be precisely that instant when the return of the repressed figure occurs and the most striking metaphorical identifications are revealed to depend on metonymic contiguities. Metaphor and metonymy neither simply assert nor automatically cancel each other; they inter-involve themselves in a simultaneous affirmation and negation of their rhetorical authority. All texts, literary or critical, go on forever saying and unsaying their own language.

The best-known second-generation deconstructor is undoubtedly Johnson whose translations of Derrida quickly became regarded as classics of deconstructive criticism. Deeply influenced by de Man's teaching, Johnson brilliantly adapted his mode of dismantling texts through close readings of their rhetorical operations. For example, while deconstruction has always been either implicitly or explicitly concerned with problems in the history of Western philosophy and culture and therefore necessarily with ethical and political issues, critics such as Johnson address these concerns of the real world with the full complement of deconstructive techniques at their disposal.

However, some critics regard the views of the deconstructive critics mentioned above as controversial. Howells (1998) maintains that Derrida believes that structure has become itself the main object of study, no longer a mere heuristic tool, a method of reading, or even a system of objective relations, but that structure has become the end-point of critical analysis (Howells 1998: 33). He further maintains that although Derrida has sometimes been referred to as a post-structuralist, and despite his indebtedness to the structural linguistics of Saussure, Derrida's engagement with structuralism is nothing like as detailed, extensive and far-reaching as his engagement with phenomenology. However, what I would like to highlight now is that, despite his critical evaluation of one of the major fathers of structuralism, the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure,

contemporary literary structuralism has radically transformed the role and significance of structure.

I do not intend to dwell much longer on the critical issues but I would like to say that it is possible to counter this charge, as some of Derrida's followers have done, by showing that deconstruction seeks not to destroy meaning but to expose the production of meaning as an arbitrary effect of writing. The exposure of this arbitrariness is most apparent at those points where a text's explicit statement is incompatible with its implicit principles of logic or rhetoric. As it now stands, deconstructive criticism is literally and figuratively all over the map. As a result, some hard-line deconstructors have complained that over time deconstruction has lost its original radical impact, that it has been neutralised or eclectically diluted by less rigorous techniques of reading. Paradoxically, others maintain that it is still nihilistic, without respect for meaning, history or truth. While early fears that deconstruction would destroy the academy by questioning Western values have proved to be unfounded, there is no denying that deconstruction has undergone considerable changes in focus and application over its relatively brief development.

Applying a deconstructive critique to this particular study, the society structure that I am focusing on is the school. I had to use deconstructive criticism to look very closely at the textual meanings and language of the findings derived from the previous chapter (chapter 4) by trying to establish and tease out what is not specified, what is privileged, what is suppressed and what is hidden in relation to the experiences of learners in school governance. Particularly for school governance, I had chosen to adopt a Derridean definition of 'deconstruction' because of the emphasis it places upon the relationship between the reader and the text, and I was further attracted to deconstruction for various reasons, some of which are listed below:

(a) Deconstruction could be used for 'thrashing', that is, showing that particular arguments were fundamentally incoherent, (b) deconstruction claims that meanings are inherently unstable, (c) deconstruction discovers instability and indeterminacy everywhere; it seems to support the notion that social structures are contingent and social meanings malleable and fluid, (d) deconstruction seems to show that all texts undermine their own logic and have multiple meanings that conflict with each other, (e) deconstruction is useful as a critical tool because it exposes the gap or inadequate privileging of a particular concept more than the other, (f) deconstructive post-critical inquiry celebrates 'plurality' (that no one can be oppressed, marginalised and disempowered, including voices of women and/or children,) and 'difference' (we are all different) and (g) it aims to deconstruct (undo, dismantle and overturn) meaning in language and knowledge systems through textual analysis. According to Derrida (1967) this means that the insertion of texts into new contexts continually produces new meanings that are both partly different from and partly similar to previous understandings, and this is what I intend to do next when deconstructing the experiences of learners below.

The questions I would like to attempt to answer are: How does deconstructive critique as looking for the hidden, suppressed and what has been privileged led me to draw the conclusion that deliberation is not present in the structure of school governance? In addition, how does it occur within the given text? I had to seek out the contradictions in the text in order to prove that the text lacks unity and coherence. The point was not really to show that the text means the opposite of what it is supposed to mean, but that there can be no actual conclusion in the interpretation of the text.

The most important thing for me as an interpreter and an author was to guard against bias, as from the beginning I was too involved in this study. The question then is how did I avoid being biased in my analysis? The first and ongoing step

for me was to deliberately 'bracket' presuppositions that I might have had concerning the phenomenon to be deconstructed i.e. learner democratic participation.

5.1.4 Bracketing

In the phenomenological method the first step is to deliberately 'bracket' presuppositions. Accordingly, presuppositions derived from formal theories and research findings related to the general topic of meaning and purpose in life were acknowledged and put aside. Giorgi's (1975) principle of bracketing specific procedural assumptions was also employed. So among the specific kinds of presuppositions to be bracketed according to this author are those based on theories or earlier research findings, those drawn from the investigator's personal knowledge and belief, and those assumptions which would dictate specific research methods.

The reason was not to place in hierarchy or to privilege any specific group of participants against the other but to present the data as it is. Heath (2000: 55) describes bracketing as self-reflection by the investigator to examine his or her own beliefs, in order to become aware of any hidden or potential presuppositions and biases that could change the way the investigator obtains the data and interprets the results. According to Burbules and Warnick (2004) this involves analysing a term or concept and showing its multiple uses and meanings, for the primary purpose of clarification. This may include arguing for internal or external distinctions that differentiate significantly different meanings, and may include a recommendation or prescription of the term's 'proper' use. In other instances, the analysis may be more neutral and descriptive (diagnostic).

Heath (2000) goes on to explain that to achieve this, one needs to rely on two main ways to prevent bias. Firstly, bracketing, which involves suspending one's preconceptions and presuppositions, and which is done by laying these

presuppositions and preconceptions out in as clear and complete a form as possible (Heath 2000: 55). The second method of preventing bias is the use of imaginative variation (Heath 2000), which involves playing with the sentences to see if they could have more than one possible meaning. Where a sentence is found which has more than one possible meaning, the protocol/theme needs to be checked to see if other sentences can help clarify it (Heath 2000: 55).

Accordingly, presuppositions derived from formal theories and research findings related to the general topic of meaning and purpose in life were acknowledged and put aside. When deconstructing the text, Giorgi's (1970) principle of bracketing specific procedural assumptions was employed. Among the specific kinds of presuppositions to be bracketed, according to Giorgi, are those based on theories or earlier research findings, those drawn from the investigator's personal knowledge and belief, and those assumptions which would dictate specific research methods. Ashworth (1999: 711) makes a rather specific point about the way in which bracketing should produce undistorted descriptions:

The researcher cannot assume any hierarchical ordering of the elements comprising the conscious experience; that is, initially all components should be given equal importance and no external theoretical concepts can be used as a norm to decide that some internal aspects are more essential than others (Ashworth 1999: 711).

What Ashworth means is that it is imperative for the researcher to help reveal the personal reality of the respondent without imposing his/her pre-conceived ideas, knowledge and beliefs about the phenomena in question, but to describe that phenomenon as it really is, as it reveals itself in terms of its essential nature against the background of reality. In any fundamental analysis, the point of departure can only be the phenomenon itself to be studied. Furthermore, Conrad (1999) in Ashworth found it particularly important to bracket the natural attitude,

since it tends to lead the researcher towards such things as what causes the phenomenon, not what the phenomenon is in its appearance as a human experience. According to him, a danger in such a failure of bracketing lies in the fact that the models and concepts of attribution theory have an ambiguous relationship to experience.

Secondly, I looked for arguments that revolve around the analysis of conceptual oppositions, using Derrida (1967) and Balkin (1995) who both posit that deconstruction often looks for the ways in which one term in the opposition has been 'privileged' over the other in a particular text. Balkin, for example, posits that one term may be privileged because it is considered the general, normal, central case, while the other is considered special, exceptional, peripheral or derivative. Furthermore, he argues that something may also be privileged because it is considered truer, more valuable, more important, or more universal than it is opposite. Moreover, he further argues that because things can have more than one opposite, many different types of privileging can occur simultaneously.

This passing of multiple meanings as for Burbules and Warnick (2004: 4) is itself a valuable contribution to knowledge. Apparent misunderstandings or disagreements are often attributable to people using the 'same' terms or concepts in tacitly different ways; by becoming clearer about the varied meanings, it becomes possible to focus better on what is actually in dispute. Some analytical projects are about debunking certain usages of a concept in favour of others; here analysis is linked with elements of critique – some usages are judged to be ambiguous, ill-considered, superficial or biased in which aspects of a topic they highlight and which they obscure (Burbules & Warnick 2004: 4).

Thirdly, when deconstructing it is necessary to overthrow the hierarchy, therefore I also followed Balkin (1995) who maintains that one can explore how

the reasons for privileging A over B also apply to B, or how the reasons for B's subordinate status apply to A in unexpected ways. Furthermore, Balkin believes that one may also consider how A depends upon B, or is actually a special case of B. He believes that the goal of these exercises is to achieve a new understanding of the relationship between A and B, which, to be sure, is always subject to further deconstruction.

Fourthly, I employed an ideological critique, which is viewed by Balkin (1995) as the most important technique of deconstruction. In this situation, deconstruction is useful because ideologies often operate by privileging certain features of social life while suppressing or de-emphasising others. While employing this method deconstructive analysis look for what is de-emphasised, overlooked or suppressed in a particular way of thinking, or in a particular set of documents or texts. Derrida considers every text to have a surplus meaning and therefore to be susceptible to deconstruction. This surplus is inherent to language: no author can avoid or circumvent the multiplicity of meanings of a text, a word.

Lastly, when deconstructing the text I looked for the figural and rhetorical features to see how they interact with or consent upon the arguments made in the text. For example, I looked for unexpected relationships between different parts of the text, or loose threads that at first glance appeared peripheral yet often turned out to undermine or confuse the argument. I also considered the multiple meanings of key words in a text, relationships between words, and I even show how the text speaks with different and often conflicting voices. What I have mentioned so far made it easy for me to go straight to the experiences of learners in school governance as a text to be deconstructed.

5.2 Learner position on democratic participation

I have used the deconstructive technique for ‘thrashing’ the arguments emanating from the data from the previous chapter. Particularly here I will be using deconstructive analysis to show that the insertion of texts into new contexts continually produces new meanings that are partly different from and partly similar to previous understandings.

It is of importance to highlight that deconstruction is useful as a critical tool because it exposes the gap or inadequate privileging of one particular concept more than another. Burbules and Warnick (2004: 7) explain this idea further by asserting that a deconstructor needs to explore the hidden assumptions underlying a particular view. These assumptions, when held up for scrutiny, change the ways in which the idea is previously viewed and valued. Moreover, I have also supported the argument using the existing literature.

Firstly, emanating from the previous chapter is the argument that learner democratic participation and experience in school governance is characterised by lack of freedom. The following is an extract from schools.

“Learners are elected through the teacher Liaison Officer (TLO). The liaison educator helps learners by calling them to a meeting. The TLO makes them to be fully aware of the fact that those learners who are elected to represent other learners are not there to raise complaints of the dissatisfaction all the time. They are elected so as to help in the development of the school”.

The above text reveals that learners are elected by or in the presence of the TLO. In some schools data has revealed that learners are elected by school management teams or by educators. What is happening could not be supported by the RCL Guides that stipulate that the teacher liaison officer (TLO) is expected to convene the first RCL meeting. He/she (TLO) is expected to be a reliable and sympathetic educator who can build a trusting relationship with the RCL and school management in order to promote communication between him or herself, the principal, staff and the RCL. His/her main function should be to guide and organise the RCL and develop a sense of leadership in the members of the RCL.

The TLO is not supposed to be the one to elect the RCL, but to convene the first meeting of the elected members of RCL by their fellow learners. This means that the above text confirms that learners' freedom of speech is hampered. This is because learners who are to be members of school governance are elected in the presence of senior educators or by members of the school management team. By allowing or by sending representation from the previously mentioned group of educators, the school intends to manipulate, coerce, intimidate and influence learners.

By informing the learner representative council who is to be a member of SGB and that they are not there to cause trouble is a sign of silencing the learner. I would like to point out that what is happening happens despite the democratic process the schools claim to be following and by so doing they infringe on learner rights and freedom of speech. Furthermore, what is taking place does not portray conducive circumstances for good governance as it demonstrates a lack of democratic principles, which are supported by our young South African democracy.

Freedom of speech is one of the principles of democracy and democratic participation. For democratic participation to succeed there is a need for every

member to be free to voice his/her opinion. Freedom of speech is explained explicitly by Holden (1988: 18), who maintains that 'liberty' means freedom in a social context. The term 'individual liberty', according to Holden, refers to the freedom of individuals with respect to their social, and particularly their political, environment. Liberal democrats believe that for democratic participation to succeed, the word 'freedom' should be translated for individuals to mean self-determination, for it is the free individual who determines his or her own actions.

The self-determination of the people, according to Holden, consists in making its own determination of decisions and the point at issue here is the 'liberty of the people' as a collective entity. For this study freedom of learners in school governance is of outmost importance. Without freedom learners cannot learn from an early age to be good citizens in this country. Learners need to learn from the structure of governance to critique and argue constructively, and at the same time to offer reasons for the better good of school governance

Secondly, learner individual rights of democratic participation are infringed. The following extract from the data confirms this assertion.

"When there are critical issues, irregularities on the teacher's side, the parent component is reluctant to involve learner component nursing their insecurity or lack of technical handling of the matter [of] concern" (PB).

In this case I do not lay the blame entirely on the educators and the schools. The confusion was created by the authors of the RCL Guides. The role of conditional participation of learners emanated from them. The role is written as follows: "in appropriate situations, an RCL provides learners with an opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding the school" (Eastern Cape Department of Education (2001: L-1) (see also appendix 2).

This means that learner participation is conditional and minimal and this contradicts the very purpose of the Guides and the South African Schools Act. Learners in principle are supposed to be full members of SGBs. And according to this clause, they are expected not to participate fully in decision-making, but to participate in “appropriate” matters. To me, this does not indicate being given full status, but a conditional status. Moreover, it does not clarify who must decide on behalf of learners, whether parents because they are in the majority or educators. On the other hand it does not specify as to which matters are deemed appropriate or not. That is where the contradiction lies.

However, here in South Africa individual rights are protected by law. Those who infringe those who infringe upon the rights of individuals are punishable by law. The initiatives underpinned by the Constitution formed the basis for the democratic system and provided a Bill of Rights that guaranteed basic fundamental rights for all citizens, old and young alike, including learners in schools. South Africa as a signatory of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights adopted human rights as one of the central themes of the new Constitution.

It is therefore obvious that these human rights objectives can only be fulfilled in a democratic school that exists in the context of a democratic society. If learners are to be taught respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the early years of their school days, for example, they will hopefully enjoy these rights and freedoms in the later years of their lives. At the same time, if educators are to teach children and young people respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, they must enjoy this freedom themselves.

Thirdly, there is lack of equality in the structure of school governance as revealed by the data in the previous chapter. Here learners have to endure the situation where they are supposed to accept decisions taken on their behalf as they are

from time to time excluded from attending meetings. When they eventually do attend some meetings, their views are silenced by the attitude and behaviour of other stakeholders such as parents and educators who exclude them because of their age. The following extract is from the data.

“They are not treated equally due to age query and their maturity. Parents sometimes complain that they are children they do not need to know everything and sometimes parents feel that learners are learners, they should study books.”

According to the Eastern Cape Department of Education Manual (2001: C5) at the secondary level, the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) is seen as a full partner in the governance of the school and as the only body that represents every learner and in which every learner can participate. Through this system, learners' voices are supposed to be carried all the way to the top and have a weight in the formulation and implementation of the educational policy. This means that learners are legitimate members of school governance regardless of age if they are in the secondary school. If learners are treated differently in the structure of school governance, this means that their rights are again violated.

If learners are not regarded as legitimate members and cannot fully participate as members in school governance the structure is not legitimate. The argument therefore is: if learners cannot take decisions with other stakeholders, the notion of democracy that involves an 'individualist' conception of the people is not taken seriously by the members of school governance and, if that is the situation, democratic participation is not taking place.

Holden (1988: 19) supports the above view. He maintains that, for democratic participation to take place, the central point is that a democrat can make sense of the notion of the people making a decision only where there is freedom to

present different viewpoints to the people, and where the people are free to make whatever decision they wish. In this way, freedom of speech, organisation and assembly, are seen as essential if democratic participation is to exist. What Holden is advocating here is closely related to what Rawls (1972) calls the principle of greatest equal liberty, which insists that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all (Johnson *et al.* 2001: 184).

Fourthly, there is lack of fair opportunity as illegitimate decisions are taken without all members being represented. The following extract proves the assertions.

“Adults think that they can solve these problems without learners because when learners are involved they also see how adults can behave because some adults shout and get out of the meetings without reaching conclusions”.

The above texts clearly show that there is lack of fair opportunity and equality in the structure of school governance. Participants do not treat each other as partners for the better good of governance. There is no element of sameness as advocated by the principles of democracy and participation of which all South Africans boast: instead of treating one another as equal partners, each stakeholder wants to dominate and dictate. What I also detected is that there is an element of power struggle that seems to emerge, as each stakeholder wants his or her voice to rise above the others. In the process of this power struggle, there are those who dominate and those who are dominated. Learners in this case are the ones who are being dominated rather than being treated as equal partners.

Nevertheless, what I would like to point out is that, for democratic participation to take place, the principle of equality has to play a central role in school governance. Holden (1988: 15) in this regard insists that the existence of political equality may often be regarded as necessary if a system is to qualify as democratic and participatory, a necessary condition of governance. The basic conception here is that each individual is to be treated equally, and with due regard to his/her actual personal preferences. Because of such a belief, most democrats hold that the principle of equality – in this case, the principle that all people should be treated equally – is intrinsically valid. Holden further argues that equality has to do with 'sameness' and its proper recognition of things, for example, persons and groups (Holden 1988: 15).

My understanding of Holden's argument is that democratic participation demands that things which are the same in relevant important respects ought to be treated equally, that is, in relation to those respects in which they ought to be treated in the same way. Furthermore, this not only shows lack of commitment to good governance but immorality on the part of other stakeholders because all that is taking place happens despite the basic conception that each individual is to be treated equally, and with due regard to his/her actual personal preferences.

Liberal theories of moral and democratic participation could help explain what is supposed to be done in the structure of school governance. This idea is made explicit by Holden (1988: 174), who posits that the distinctive pronouncement on the moral importance of individuals is that people should never be treated 'simply' as a means, but always at the same time as an end. The same idea is endorsed by John Rawls (1972) who bases his philosophical approach on a theoretical group of equal, rational individuals seeking as individuals to secure their own best interests in negotiating with other members of the group in democratic and participatory forms of governance.

Fifthly, there is lack of free development of members in the structure of school governance. In all schools I visited non-teaching staff were not included as members of school governance. Although it was beyond the scope of this study to query that abnormality, I did not fail to notice it. The manual also does not stipulate compulsory participation of non-teaching staff. For example, the manual stipulates that if the school does not have a non-teaching member of staff the number of parent governors must be reduced by one so that the total number of governors will be reduced by two. This to me allows schools to get away with the exclusion of this sector of people. The following extract reveals that.

“In our SGB we do have seven parents, three educators and two learners.”

In addition to non-teaching staff, out of the five schools I visited, only one school has four learners in the school governance. When it comes to voting for decisions those in the majority always win. I have noticed that the majority rule principle is being misused to perpetuate the selfish motives of individuals. Almost all schools that participated in the study boasted that when there is no possibility of consensus being reached, they resolve to use the voting process to let the majority win. However, if one could look at and scrutinise the number of learners who participate in school governance, they are the worst off and are in the minority.

The schools do not follow the guide stipulation of the break-down of members who must participate in the structure of school governance. According to the table, parents should be in the majority and educators and learners are distributed equally, (see the Eastern Cape guide provided). The allocation of educators in all schools for example is different from the requirements of the

guides. Coming to the majority rule principles, it is one of the principles that guides and drives democratic rule. Elections and decisions are taken by majority rule. Although it is so, that does not mean that everybody is happy and that does not mean that other ways cannot be solicited. I am saying that the majority rule principle can be misused in some instances where those in the majority will enforce their needs by putting them ahead of everyone else's needs for selfish reasons. I also mean that although the voting system is a norm that does not mean that everybody is satisfied with the majority rule principle. Because they are in the minority those who oppose will always be dissatisfied and conflict in many situations will emerge.

The idea of decision-making in traditional communities is described by Mandela (1994) in his book *'Long walk to freedom'*. He maintains that in traditional communities, no decisions could be taken by means of voting as one group could be put in a disadvantaged position. This is the practice which used to take place in the past (pre- and post-colonial) where no conclusion was forced on people who disagreed. Democracy meant all men/women were heard, and a decision was taken together as a people. If no agreement was reached, another meeting would be held (Mandela 1994: 24-25). Majority rule was a foreign notion and the minority was not to be crushed by the majority. This is still the system that is followed in some black communities more especially the one I come from.

There is a need to monitor this situation very well, and in my understanding it needs maturity. As I have already mentioned, most people use it as pretence to further their own means. They cling to the fact that for democratic participation to be justified, the decision of the majority of the people should be accepted because it is counted as the decision of all the people. Liberals such as Rawls normally supports this argument by advocating that majority decision-making is normally the fairest decision-making procedure, or that it is likely to arrive at the

correct or most reasonable decision (in Holden 1988: 38), but this is not so in the case of school governance.

However, what I want to highlight at this point is that the members of school governance do not use the majority rule principle responsibly. This principle needs to be used in a responsible way by responsible and mature people. What I observed during this study is that the members of school governance are not yet mature enough to carry out the task given to them, that they are not yet ready to have the autonomy to govern their schools, and there are no checks and balances to monitor how things are to be done. I believe that this weakness is because participants do not have the necessary skills to deliberate as responsible citizens as they are not fully empowered to argue for the better good of school governance. Empowerment of all stakeholders is imperative for good governance.

This lack of empowerment of stakeholders more especially in the Eastern Cape is explained further in the Daily Dispatch of March 12, 2008, by Mngxaso who believes that the involvement of community members in the running of schools is somewhat of a socialist policy of which many revolutionary stalwarts in South Africa may approve. Furthermore, he maintains that the real issue that affects governance is the level of participation of community members in deliberations where the school governing decisions are taken and positions adopted (Daily Dispatch 2008: 9). His argument further states that when meetings are held both pupils and parents would be as quiet as court attendants as there is generally no constructive contribution from them, many of whom do not even know the South African Schools Act.

If what is suggested could be taken into consideration, meaningful deliberation could take place in school governing bodies. Deliberation is very important for members of school governance, as it requires an ongoing discussion among each

and every stakeholder aimed at setting the agenda for public issues, proposing alternative solutions to the problems on the agenda, supporting those solutions with reasons, and concluding by settling on some alternatives. One crucial element of deliberative democracy is that citizens' vote in ways they believe justice requires, where judgment is made on the basis of reasons and considerations that all can accept as democratic citizens. This is not taking place in school governance and I can see that they are not capable of doing that now. I am not denying the fact that training is conducted for newly elected parents and educators who are members of school governance. What I am pointing out is that it is not enough, for example learners and educators agree that there is no training for learners. How can all schools resort to voting if no consensus can be reached? In this structure of governance consensus should be a requirement before voting takes place.

Sixthly, there is domination of social and cultural traditions that kept on emerging from the data. The following extract highlights this assertion.

"There is an element of inequality on parent component and learner component. Teacher component treat[s] them badly".

I have also observed that, whether consciously or unconsciously, the stakeholders who are part of school governance allow cultural and traditional practices to dictate their behaviour and the way they conduct themselves. Judging from the circumstances surrounding the behaviour and responses of educators, it is undoubtedly true that the environment contributes to the failure of democratic participation in schools. To make this point more clearly, my own background is equally powerfully steeped in cultural practices. According to the place where I grew up and lived until now, wives and children are looked upon as minors, and have no legitimate powers. It is worth mentioning that in Pondoland women and children can still not command power or influence and

they remain under the guidance and supervision of their husbands or fathers if they remain unmarried. It is only now during this democratic period that such a practice is challengeable in a court of law.

Such behaviour is being perpetuated by both cultural and traditional values and practices that are dominant in some black communities. What happens in the society is consciously or unconsciously being transferred to the school community. Schein (1992) in his exploration of organisational culture has drawn attention to the importance of shared values. He maintains that a healthy organisational climate (or culture) is characterised by shared norms and values. In a sense, I can say that the conflict between their personal values and those of other stakeholders is therefore a symptom of the larger problem which is not going to be further investigated in this study because of its focus.

Finally, empowerment of learners is minimal although they are positive, full of confidence and visionary on matters pertaining to school governance and beyond. The following extract supports the assertion.

“I never heard of any training given to them. They are not even supported”.

Learners are also denied opportunities of being empowered and their chances of development are minimal. I say this because one of the notable features I noticed in the schools under study is that learners have been rather deprived of training by the schools they attend. This is not a good practice because the transformation of South African society, and more especially of schools, has brought with it rare opportunities to try out ideas that were not taken seriously in the past. More especially, transformation has created a climate of renewal, of openness to new ideas, and the need to find a bold new vision to deal with

problems that have previously either not been taken seriously, or were entirely ignored, such as participation of learners in the structure of governance.

Given the numerical prominence of youth in all developing countries, our youth are an important constituency and they need to be developed. I do not understand why educators would deny learners this important opportunity. In South Africa, this has been more pertinent because of the important role that a significant sector of the youth played during the struggle against apartheid. Sithole (1996) for example, in his case study of "Amandlethu Public School" looked at the shortcomings of the Amandlethu school governance structure and theory implications for the decentralisation of school governance as a whole.

He argues that as a result of the part played by students during the liberation of South Africa, they (students) deserve to take part in all discussions regarding their education. His findings suggest that spaces should be created for learners to participate sufficiently in SGBs in order to allow them to exercise their right to participate. Mncube (2005), on the other hand, implies that schools which willingly opened up spaces for students to deliberate and dialogue were more democratic than their authoritarian counterparts.

From 1976 onwards the youth were seen, and saw themselves, as important allies in the struggle. Numerical strength plays an important role in youth politics, more so when an increased number of intellectuals are being produced, but without easily accessible avenues of employment for them. If learners can be empowered from the early stages of their lives, and more especially in schools, their future will be bright and more opportunities will be opened for them, especially in leadership and management.

Dieltiens (2000) on the other hand believes that if more people could be included in school governing bodies, democracy would be boosted and equality among

school stakeholders would be ensured. She maintains that educational decisions should reflect public deliberation. Furthermore, she posits that education should prepare students to engage in democratic processes, to be able to recognise their own interests and those of the broader community. In short, an education that builds the autonomy of students.

I believe that the acceleration of empowerment of black learners could enhance the growth and developmental capacity of the economy as a whole and should be given prominence in schools. Nevertheless, despite what is happening, learners are very positive and have visions for future participation in school governance.

“I feel very strongly about it. I feel it is very important for learners to be involved in those decisions as some of them involve us. We should get a say in them. It is necessary that there be at least one RCL representative at each SGB meeting because I feel that the only way in which the ideas of the pupils at the school can be properly received is if they are represented by the student representatives”.

This is contrary to what is taking place in the structure of school governance. Learners are determined to take part and represent other learners as members of school governance. They are very optimistic that, in the end, positive results will be borne by their participating in school governance. This to me is a positive sign that needs to be encouraged by all stakeholders. These learners are prepared to tolerate and forgive the behaviour of other stakeholders for the sake of better school governance.

I strongly believe that when an initiative is taken to rectify what is now prevailing in school governance, learners will grab the opportunity with open arms. I also believe that where there are organisational values that are known and

communicated freely, properly and openly, there will be a spirit of tolerance that will prevail among all its members. I believe that where there is tolerance there will be good working relations, mutual understanding, and an active appreciation of the value of human difference. There will also be no problem of gender, race or class difference and people will live together in harmony.

Karlsson (2002) in her study on democratic governing bodies, argues that the governance reforms failed to include measures that prevent a re-enactment of traditional South African power relations of race, class and gender at schools. She further maintains that the apartheid-era inequalities continue to manifest in various forms in schools. The inequalities of the past, where learners have no say in the governance of schools re-emanate in the school governance. The learners' voice is being deliberately silenced by other stakeholders during their participation in school governance.

If these inequalities could be solved the spirit of *ubuntu* will prevail across different languages, different cultural backgrounds and religions, because such values are tolerated in the workplace (Mbigi & Maree 1995). Such values need to be encouraged by educators because the person possessing *ubuntu* will have characteristics such as being "caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, virtuous and blessed" (Le Roux 2000: 46).

I am of the opinion that the problems experienced in the structure of school governance arise out of a lack of understanding of societal values and beliefs, and this leads to a lack of tolerance in the structure of school governance. *ubuntu* then is a philosophy that will promote the common good of society as it includes humanness and dialogue as essential elements of human growth. At this point it is of vital importance that I highlight the fact that I will not be expanding on the *ubuntu* concept as it is dealt in the remaining section of this chapter.

5.3 Summary of findings

It is obvious that learners who are part of school governance are victims of socio-economic and organisational instability of schools, which has manifested itself in various ways in this study. Six of the problem areas emerging strongly from a deconstructive analysis of the text are as follows: first, it is obvious that there is minimal democratic participation in the structure of school governance; second, the deliberative democracy I have advocated throughout this study is not practised by school governance stakeholders; third, there is a lack of democratic engagement in the structure of school governance; fourth, school governance is characterised by a lack of justice on the part of stakeholders; fifth, stakeholders lack the African spirit of *ubuntu*; and lastly learners are not being prepared to be tomorrow's citizens.

Furthermore, facts deduced from the findings reveal that the situation in schools, where learners are supposed to be participating in school governance, is far from ideal. Their kind of participation can best be summarised by means of the following three concepts: tokenism, manipulation and decoration. By decoration, I mean that learners are used as flowers to decorate school governance meetings. They are invited so as to be placed there as monuments to decorate the structure of governance, so that any one who is a spectator would be able to say that the democratic principles, as advocated by the South African Schools Act and the South African Constitution, are adhered to by schools.

On the other hand, other members of school governance are tokenising learner participation. By tokenism I mean that learners are placed in the structure of governance as tokens to be endured; for example, they just sit and say nothing, according to the educators and the principals. No one is willing to give them a chance or advise them to participate or try to draw them into the discussions, let alone engage them, as they are regarded as intruders in something they are not

supposed to hear or see. In return, learners are expected to appreciate the fact that they have been promoted as members who sit side by side with educators and parents as this means that their status has been elevated, their ego has been boosted, and they should be thankful for this.

Moreover, as learners enjoy being members of school governance, during the process they are being manipulated and coerced to go along with what has already been agreed upon by other stakeholders, as decisions are taken with or without them. This means that they are being used or coerced to endorse or rubber-stamp all kinds of decisions or policies that other stakeholders intend to implement. I am of the opinion that Rodger Hurt's ladder of participation could be very useful if applied in schools. According to his idea of participation, learners are still occupying the first three rungs of the ladder.

It is now appropriate to try and answer the very research question for this particular study, which reads as follows: "What idea of democratic participation could prevent the exclusion of learner voices in SGBs?" The answer to this question could best be answered by introducing a new model of democratic school governance to be known as 'deliberative democratic school governance' (DDSG), as I believe it will offer a solution to the school governance problems outlined above.

The above mentioned identified areas (problems) of concern will form the basis for my argument in defence of the proposed deliberative democratic school governance model (DDSG). What has been mentioned so far has made it easier for me to move on to deliberative democratic school governance. The questions I intend to answer are: how can deliberative democratic school governance help to develop and reconstruct what is happening in school governance now, and how can it help to recover a vision of school governance that is not "muted", "repressed" and silenced? As already alluded to, the answer to these questions

could be obtained from this new model of deliberative democratic school governance.

5.4 Deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) model

Coming up with a suitable definition for deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) will not be a milestone to achieve as the very concept is derived from a theory coined by theorists such as Habermas, Young, Benhabib, Rawls, and many others who have put forward the notion of 'deliberative democracy'. When coining my own definition for deliberative democratic school governance I use some of the characteristic features/concepts of deliberative democracy as put forward by these theorists.

Habermas (1996), for example, in his theory of deliberative democracy argues for consensus, communicative action and rationality. He asserts that for democratic participation to be in place there should be consensus which should take place through deliberation and reasoning. For Habermas there is no doubt that participation invariably needs to result in consensus. He asserts that rationality must be dialogical or 'communicative' through which participants advance arguments and counter arguments. His defence of communicative reason is quite forthright about communicative rationality as the consensus-bringing force of argumentative speech. He asserts that only the force of the better argument reaches consensual decisions, so that, at the end of the deliberative process, all concerned are convinced by the decisions reached and accept them as reasonable.

However Young (1996), in her argument for a deliberative democracy, argues for inclusion, asymmetrical reciprocity, rhetoric and narratives. She calls for the inclusion of individuals and/or groups who will be affected by the policy decision under consideration as an important and necessary requirement to achieve true democratic legitimacy. Young describes inclusion as the cornerstone of

democracies, and emphasises that the prevention of exclusion is paramount. She then explores the idea of listening to one another as she suggests that listening to the other is more respectful of one's unique individual position as it is the only way to respect the uniqueness and 'irreplaceability' of each person. According to Young the ideals of deliberation are, most notably, the goals of reciprocity and reasonableness, where participants engage in public discussion and may not only express their own view, but also listen and learn from others.

An important aspect of Young's approach is her conception of asymmetrical reciprocity in moral theory. According to her, asymmetrical reciprocity is one of the principles belonging in a democratic theory. She maintains that reciprocity requires that citizens owe one another justification for the mutually binding laws and public policies they collectively enact. Young also believes in narratives. For her the importance of stories and dialogue not only tells us something but it also tells the histories of others. Furthermore, it helps construct an account of the web of social relations between people.

Benhabib (1996) in her defence of deliberative democracy put forward an idea of democratic reflexivity. For Benhabib, communicative ethics is the processual generation of reasonable agreement about moral principles via an open-ended moral conversation. She believes that the emphasis shifts to examine the normative practices and moral relationships within which reasoned agreement as a way of life can flourish and continue. Benhabib thus extends the options for marginalised individuals in challenging their 'situatedness' by insisting on their discursive power in the name of future identities and communities. For her, deliberative engagement can also result in a temporary consensus whereby deliberative agents reflexively reconsider a less persuasive argument in order to achieve a more reasoned and justifiable conclusion, and that entails a revolution in consciousness.

Finally, Rawls (1972) comes up with reflective equilibrium and principles of justice. He posits that deliberation occurs as a process of reflective equilibrium. For him, the process of reflective equilibrium occurs in people who take, as their starting point, considered moral judgements found initially credible, and adjusts them according to several standards of rational acceptability, yielding normal theory, a consistent, logically related set of judgements. In his *Theory of Justice* he delineates a number of other conditions as well, for example adequate information, a norm of political equality in which the force of the argument takes precedence over power and authority.

Rawls further argues for an absence of strategic manipulation of information, perspective, processes, or outcomes in general, and a broad public orientation toward reaching right answers rather than serving narrow self-interest. Some of the concepts that have emerged from the above theorists form the basis for defining deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG). However, in addition to deliberative democratic concepts, elements of *ubuntu* will also be included because DDSG's dominant theme is that the life of another person is at least as valuable as one's own. Furthermore *ubuntu* recognises a person's status as a human being, entitled to unconditional respect, dignity, value and acceptance from the members of the community such a person happens to be part of. An outstanding feature of *ubuntu* in a community sense is the value it puts on life and human dignity, for example, a person has a corresponding duty to give the same respect, dignity, value and acceptance to each member of that community. Characteristic features such as respect for the dignity of every person are integral to this study on democratic participation of learners in school governance.

For deliberative democratic school governance to be realised some of the following concepts will be taken into consideration: consensus, communicative action, rationality, inclusion, reciprocity, narratives, democratic reflexivity,

deliberation and reasoning, reflective equilibrium, principles of justice and respect. With these concepts put into practice in the school governance and in schools at large, deliberative democracy will be practised by school governance stakeholders, democratic participation will be realised, stakeholders will uphold the African spirit of *ubuntu*, learners will be prepared to be tomorrow's citizens, conditions for democratic engagement in the structure of school governance will be created, and opportunities for democratic justice will prevail in the structure of school governance and in society at large.

Now I believe I am in a better position to produce a relevant definition for deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG).

5.4.1 Deliberative democratic school government defined

Deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) will be a self-renewal strategy to be managed collaboratively on a consensual basis by all members of school governance inclusively, using African principles of *ubuntu*. It is a process which needs to be carefully planned and implemented in order to benefit educators, learners and all stakeholders. It is an educational strategy which is intended to change the beliefs, attitudes and values of school governance stakeholders so that they can better adapt to change. Its long term goal will be to increase the school governance capacity for self-revitalisation, to increase its stakeholder ability to adapt to new conditions, solve problems and create a culture that focuses on the continuous growth of the schooling system as a whole.

5.5 Goals of deliberative democratic school governance

The immediate goal of deliberative democratic school governance is that of solving problems/conflict, more especially those that have emanated from the data. Conflict can draw school and SGB energy away from its goals, and the sooner stakeholders focus on the situation and explore appropriate action, the

better. At the moment, one way of describing the fullness of stakeholder participation in school governance is in six interrelated areas, each of which requires competence and commitment as they have been revealed by the data as major problems that hinder democratic participation in school governance.

5.5.1 Learner democratic justice

The first problem to look at as identified by the data is the lack of democratic justice in the structure of school governance. As a problem-solving strategy, deliberative democratic school governance will help create opportunities for democratic justice to prevail not only in the structure of school governance but also in the school community and in society at large. For a democratic justice process to happen, two important theorists – Shapiro and Gutman – support my argument on how justice should be achieved.

Firstly, Ian Shapiro (1995) recognises two general rules that should guide the search for democratic justice. The first is that “justice must be sought democratically”, because part of justice is giving people the freedom to speak their own minds. The second rule is that “democracy must be justice-promoting” because if democracy does not promote justice, it cannot be defended to the people who are suffering the injustice against their will. According to Shapiro, any democratic theory worth developing should value both process and substance.

Secondly, Shapiro believes that democracy does not bring all of justice in its wake, but democrats are right to insist that part of what constitutes justice is the freedom of ordinary people to develop and reveal their political preferences without fear of political reprisal. According to him, only a democratic government that guarantees freedom of speech, conscience, and press can provide this part of justice. Shapiro further proposes two framing principles of democratic justice: participation and anti-subordination. For him, everyone whose basic interests are

affected by institutions or practices should be able to participate in their governance on more or less equal terms with others. Moreover, everyone should be able to assert their opposition to decisions that have been made, and should be free to criticise and try to change policies and practices.

Thirdly, according to Gutman (2005: 3) Shapiro calls the democratic process a “subordinate conditioning” good. According to him, it is “subordinate” because democracy should be in the service of finding just outcomes. He believes that most of us value democracy not because we get great kicks out of participating in politics but because it will generally produce better results than its alternatives and because it expresses our equal status as citizens. Shapiro (cited in Gutman 2005: 3) maintains that democracy is a “conditioning” good because having a say in how we are governed adds value to outcomes; the value of the equal political freedom that produces those outcomes.

Fourthly, according to Shapiro, democratic justice also demands securing the basic interests of all individuals, which include adequate education, and some democratic say in the workplace. He further asserts that democracy should be “omnipresent but not omnipotent” (in Gutman 2005: 3). This means that if democracy is “omnipresent but not omnipotent”, then democratic justice will guide us toward reforming our political processes in ways that will help politics to be more democratic and more likely to yield justifiable outcomes.

Fifthly, Gutman (2005) in this book review article “Critical Theory, Democratic Justice and Globalisation” suggests that Shapiro believes that democratic justice requires the equalisation of effective communicative freedom among all structurally constituted social groups and this will have far-reaching implications that entail the deconstruction of all social hierarchies in both domestic and global orders. Moreover, Shapiro maintains that when all law-abiding members of a

society share free and equal citizenship in a fair scheme of social cooperation, they constitute a democracy.

Sixthly, another alluring way of joining democracy and justice for Shapiro is to identify democratic justice with achieving the right results, regardless of how they are achieved, as long as those results can help create a just society somewhere down the road. According to him, once we recognise the value of both process and substance, however, we immediately confront the central challenge of democracy. To the extent that democracy is identified as a process (say, an inclusive electorate with institutions of popular rule that allow for effective opposition), it may not always yield just outcomes (Gutman 2005: 1-2). Insofar as justice is identified with substantive outcomes, the democratic process may not support it.

Seventhly, Shapiro explains how and why democracy and justice should be pursued together. He believes that justice must be pursued by democratic means if it is to garner legitimacy in the modern world, and democracy must be justice-promoting if it is to sustain allegiance over time. Democratic justice, Shapiro writes, "requires that mechanisms of collective self governance be as inclusive as possible, limited by necessity only" (in Gutman 2005: 5). Furthermore, Shapiro maintains that the rights that democratic justice entails include equal political liberties for all law-abiding adults regardless of colour, gender, ethnicity, income, or wealth (in Gutman 2005: 4). Moreover, he maintains that these liberties include the right to vote in free and fair elections, to speak openly to people in power without fear of retribution, and to prevent powerful people from abusing their public trust.

Eighthly, democratic justice in this instance is grounded in the conviction that what we share deserves respect and should receive political expression. The common features of our humanity lend substance to the idea that democracy

which demands equality among citizens is just and is rooted in and reflects the claims of our common humanity and is, when all is said and done, most emphatically in accordance with justice. In many ways democracy and justice are mutually reinforcing.

Ninthly, it is believed that since the appearance of Rawls' *Theory of Justice* in 1972, the phrase 'justice as fairness' has conjured up the idea that to treat people fairly we must regard people abstractly, taking into account only generic human interests (such as primary goods) rather than particular identities and commitments. This means that individuals should be free to make their own choices in the light of what they regard as valuable and important. The task of the political community is to provide a framework within which they can make those choices under equal circumstances, not to support or undermine any particular choice.

Finally, John Rawls (1972) believes that there is also another conception of justice as fairness, which is derived from the assumption that to treat people fairly we must regard them concretely, with as much knowledge as we can obtain about who they are and what they care about. This is the ideal of democratic justice that is captured by John Rawls. For him, a society does not necessarily achieve justice merely by following majority rule. A just democracy must secure for every person a set of fundamental liberties along with adequate education, health care, productive work, and income. He further maintains that fundamental liberties include personal and political liberties such as freedom of conscience, speech, association, due process under the rule of law, and equal suffrage in free and fair elections.

I now move on to the second area, that of democratic engagement.

5.5.2 Learner democratic engagement

Lack of democratic engagement is another problem identified as a contributory factor for lack of democratic participation in schools. The aim of deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) strategy is to create conditions for democratic engagement to flourish in schools. For the DDSG model, engagement will mean the degree to which learners actively participate in school governance. Learner engagement in this view is related to learner success, which usually includes participation in school activities. Some researchers correlate engagement with time spent on an activity, while others couple time spent with measures of involvement or relevance.

Finn & Voelkl (1993: 249), for example, assert that engagement in school has both a behavioural component, termed participation, and an emotional component, termed identification. This idea is supported by Jimerson, Campos and Grief (2003: 7), who maintain that school engagement is a multifaceted construct that includes affective behavioural and cognitive dimensions. Furthermore, in reviewing the literature to examine the various definitions of school engagement, they extracted the elements characterising these constructs. According to these theorists, the affective dimension includes students' feelings about the school, teachers, and/or peers such as positive feelings towards teachers and other students.

The behavioural dimension is when learners participate in classroom and extracurricular activities, and includes students' observable actions or performance, such as participation in extracurricular activities e.g. sports, clubs, completion of homework, as well as grades, grade point averages and scores on achievement tests. Lastly, the cognitive dimension is when a student focuses on and thinks about academic tasks, processing information, and self-directed learning, and includes students' perceptions and beliefs related to self, school,

teachers, and other students (such as self-efficacy, motivation, perceiving that teachers or peers care, aspirations, expectations) (Jimerson *et al.* 2003: 7).

Secondly, school engagement has been primarily measured by observable behaviours directly related to academic effort and achievement (Johnson: 1998). Indicators of engagement that emerge relatively consistently across the literature include participation in school-related activities, achievement of high grades, amount of time spent on homework, and rate of homework completion. In addition to the behaviours listed above, some researchers include measurements of delinquency, truancy, or misbehaviour in their investigation of engagement

Thirdly, participation in school or educational engagement is indicated by various observable forms of student effort that demonstrates attention to, and involvement in, school work. Finn and Voelkl (1993) propose four levels of participation that tend to increase success in school. According to Finn, level one is necessary from the earliest school years. Participation at this level requires students to be present and attentive, to be prepared, and to be responsive as directions or questions are directed toward them. Level two builds upon the rudimentary elements of level one.

Learners exhibiting level two participation are more than passive responders, they take the initiative to ask questions, to interact with the teacher and other students on relevant topics, and to go above and beyond. Level two participation may also evidence itself by students participating in content-related clubs, extra activities and many others. Level three is a specific set of initiative-taking behaviours that involve seeking out help when academic difficulties are encountered. These behaviours stem from the students' awareness and nature of the difficulty or willingness and desire to master the difficulty and classroom environment that is supportive of seeking help.

Lastly, Finn and Voelkl (1993) emphasise that engagement or participation behaviours do not occur in a vacuum. The school and classroom context plays a large part in developing, nurturing and encouraging student engagement. Class content and activities must be perceived as challenging and relevant without being too difficult, rather than boring and unrelated to student levels and experiences.

I now turn my focus to school governance and how the above principles can be applied for better governance by all stakeholders in a deliberative democracy.

For school governance and deliberative democratic engagement to work, democracy should be underpinned by critical thinking. Based on this assertion, one can argue that the skill of critical thinking is aimed at problem-solving. For engagement to be successful in school governance I suggest a conception of learner engagement based on critical democratic practice which entails the enactment of student engagement in school governance issues. In this instance, the school as mentor for learners in a democracy becomes the forum through which learners are guided to adulthood and to fulfilling their place in a democratic society. This therefore means that democracy requires critical thinking and critical thinkers.

Secondly, critical thinking can be defined as the ability to use high-level thinking. It is used to critique ideas and is associated with rationality, reasonableness, reflective thinking and the scientific inquiry process. As such, the ability to think critically protects citizens against indoctrination and misinformation. It also empowers people to select views they are comfortable defending rationally, therefore, people who employ the skill of critical thinking will be inquisitive and will continuously examine alternatives in the process of forming conclusions (Higgs & Smith: 2002). The same could be adopted for school governance as it is a new phenomenon.

Thirdly, critical thinking is viewed by many theorists as central to the aims of education, and it has become the focus of educational reform. After democracy was established in South Africa in 1994, for example, it was necessary to change school curricula in order to develop citizens' skills for participation in that democracy, as the old curriculum was based predominantly on the retention of information and theory. Since then the South African government has been aware of the need to develop critical thinking, and the entire education process has been changed from an educator-centred to a learner-centred approach. The purpose of the new curriculum is to develop skills that are applicable in practice.

Fourthly, the goal of developing critical thinking is one of the central purposes of schools. In a democratic society the idea is to encourage critical and independent thinking necessary for effective participation in society. It is also believed that a prerequisite for critical thinking is necessary to enhance and respect freedom of expression in order to develop and encourage critical and independent thinking. Furthermore, freedom of expression creates a marketplace of ideas and ensures individual development and self-fulfilment and, moreover, the right to freedom of expression enables human beings to express new ideas and underpins discoveries that enhance scientific and cultural progress.

Fifthly, critical thinking could uplift the standard of democratic engagement in the structure of school governance, because the real importance of democratic engagement is in ensuring that people have the voice that they want and they voice what they deserve. The challenge for all schools is to work to resolve the central problem of engagement, which is that the change in turnout and the increase in protest activity leave a significant minority without a clear voice in governance. This is a challenge that simply has to be met if learners are not to be in effect disenfranchised and if we want healthy and rigorous democratic school governance. I am not saying that these reforms have a direct or an

immediate impact on democratic engagement, I want to see learners respond to it in an engaged, active way.

Lastly, engagement is vital for learners as they need to communicate as equal partners with other members of school governance, to listen to and respect the voices and votes of the other members. This method is in harmony with the belief that language is not only a means of communication but also helps learners broaden and deepen their understanding of ideas. With engagement comes legitimacy, that is, the permission to act delivered by the democratic process and the democratic decision. That permission to act leads to performance and delivery by learners. The competence or otherwise with which a learner enacts its instruction is set from the school governance structure. Such competence feeds in turn into satisfaction, and satisfaction then feeds into trust, which in turn relates back to both legitimacy and to engagement, which can be vital tools for school governance.

I now move on to citizenship education as a vehicle for solving problems for school governance.

5.5.3 Learner citizenship education

The data have revealed that learners are not being prepared to be tomorrow's citizens; therefore citizenship education will be one of the cornerstones for deliberative democratic school governance to flourish. Citizenship education is described by Nussbaum (1997) as an idea of the citizen as a free and dignified human being. She maintains that teachers must educate learners to operate as world citizens with sensitivity and understanding.

According to Nussbaum, "if one begins life as a child who loves and trusts its parents, it is tempting to want to reconstruct citizenship along the same lines, finding in an idealised image of nation or leader a surrogate parent who will do

our thinking for us" (Nussbaum 1997: 84). Here she asserts that it is up to us as educators to show our students the beauty and interest of a life that is open to the whole world, to show them that there is after all more joy in the kind of citizenship that questions than in the kind that simply applauds. According to Nussbaum (1997), this is some kind of education that liberates the mind from the bondage of habit and custom that produces people who can function with sensitivity and alertness as citizens of the whole world.

Nussbaum (1997: 65) believes that world citizenship does not and should not require that we suspend criticism toward other individuals and cultures. The world citizen, according to her, may be very critical of unjust actions or policies, and of the character of people who promote them. She also believes that an education could be truly "fitted for freedom" only if it produces free citizens, citizens who are free not because of wealth or birth, but because they can call their minds their own. Such people according to her have ownership of their own thought and speech, and this imparts to them a dignity that is far beyond the outer dignity of class and rank (Nussbaum 1997: 8).

Similar to Habermas, Young and Benhabib, Nussbaum believes in the power of human reasoning. She maintains that reason constructs the personality in a very deep way, shaping its motivations as well as its logic. She further asserts that argument not only provides students with reasons for doing thus and so, it also helps to make them more likely to act in certain ways, on the basis of certain motives. In this very deep way, it produces people who are responsible for their actions, people whose reasoning and emotion are under their own control. What this means to Nussbaum (1997: 29) is that an attitude of mutual respect should be nourished.

Above all, Nussbaum believes that education for world citizenship requires transcending the inclination of both students and educators to define themselves

primarily in terms of local group loyalties and identities. She cites Marcus Aurelius who insisted that to become world citizens we must not simply amass knowledge, but we must also cultivate in ourselves a capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forebodingly alien and other, but as sharing many problems and possibilities with us (Nussbaum 1977). She mentions the fact that as children grasp such complex facts in their imagination, they become capable of compassion. Compassion²⁶, according to Nussbaum (1997), involves the recognition that another person, in some ways similar to oneself, has suffered some significant pain or misfortune in a way for which that person is not, or not fully, to blame. According to her, if we cannot teach our learners everything they will need to know to be good citizens, we may at least teach them what they do not know and how they may inquire. Above all, we can teach them how to argue, rigorously and critically, so that they can call their minds their own.

Nussbaum's view holds that the core of rational and moral personhood is something all human beings share, shaped though it may be in different ways by their differing social circumstances, therefore she believes that practical reasoning is necessary. By practical reason she means being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's own life. Her view is that political theory should be based on "the conception of human beings as essential rational agents" (Nussbaum 1997).

²⁶ Compassion, according to Nussbaum (1997: 91), promotes an accurate awareness of our common vulnerability. To respond with compassion, one must be willing to entertain the thought that this suffering person might be me. In addition, I will be unlikely to do this if I am convinced that I am above the ordinary lot and no ill can befall me. This recognition, as they see it, helps explain why compassion so frequently leads to generous support for the needs of others: one thinks, "That might have been me, and that is how I would want to be treated."

For Nussbaum, the key type of reason to be emphasised is practical (i.e. moral and political) reason. For me, if this could be applied in schools, and more especially in school governance, deliberative democratic school governance could be achieved in South African schools.

I now move on to the fusion of African principles of *ubuntu* as part of deliberative democratic school governance.

5.5.4 The African spirit of *ubuntu*

According to Higgs and Smith (20002) the central ethical idea in traditional African thought is '*ubuntu*' and the concept of 'Communalism'. The data in this study has revealed that there is a lack of *ubuntu* principles among stakeholders who are members of school governance. Therefore, for deliberative democratic participation to take place I believe that African spirit of *ubuntu* will need to be incorporated into deliberative democracy. This means that liberal philosophical voices could be merged with voices from Africa in order to solve the problems of democratic participation in schools, and more especially in the structure of school governance by encouraging dialogue among various stakeholders.

It is believed that problem-solving in African culture is through dialogue and sharing of experiences. The process of dialogue entails the suspension of assumptions and pre-conceived ideas and the entering into genuine thinking together. This interaction between people is free-flowing, providing meaning and understanding, as well as a safe environment within which free creative thought, ideas and vision can be expressed. Furthermore, dialogue in its true sense is people learning how to learn from experience. An outcome of this process is an increased capacity for creative thinking and problem-solving. This is in stark contrast to discussions which are engaged in for the express purpose of coming to a decision.

Ramose (2002: 284) maintains that public dialogue comes into existence whenever civil societies engage in debate, i.e. whenever they evaluate the validity of the social and political norms by which they live. There may be as many civic societies as there are public dialogues, but no debate abstracts so radically from the recognition of differences. Parties to the debate are compelled by their language to consent to moral truths they do not hold or share. Dialogue, then, serves pragmatic ends – to identify the norms they think reasonable to abide by. Nevertheless, dialogue depends on the nature of the issues that get pushed onto the agenda of the public dialogue. There are matters fit for public and not for private debate. Indeed, where the boundary is drawn is a matter for negotiation, which rests on mutual consent.

I now move on to approaches/strategies that can be used to make deliberative democratic school governance function properly in schools.

5.6 Approaches to deliberative democratic school governance

There are several approaches that can be employed in creating elements for stakeholder empowerment and in driving deliberative democratic school governance forward, including storytelling, consensus, decision-making, collaboration, motivational communication, deliberation, inclusion and conflict resolution. Some school governance stakeholders and schools may use only one or a few of these strategies for solving problems in their respective schools.

5.6.1 Storytelling culture

Storytelling has been identified as a valuable strategy in the implementation of deliberative democratic school governance. It is said that one of the enduring ways in which traditional African societies instil desirable attitudes, dispositions and habits in their youngsters is through storytelling. A great deal of philosophical material is embedded in proverbs, myths, folktales, folksongs, rituals, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the people. Letseka (2000: 189)

maintains that people should learn to tell their own stories, as well as to listen to others' stories.

According to Arendt (in Johnson 2001), narrative is more able to help people think about their experiences than is theory. She believes that stories help all humans find meaning as well as helping them find that meaning together in their plurality. Arendt further explains the importance of storytelling in relationship to action. According to her, stories arise out of human plurality, out of what she calls the web of human relationships. She describes this web as consisting of conflicting wills and intentions. She believes that stories are not the work of an individual person and she asserts that a story appears to many people, not simply to the actor in the story.

According to Arendt, stories enable people to speak and act together and to appear to each other. She further asserts that stories can disclose meaning without confining that meaning to set definitions. Although each person's life may contain a story, no one can live her or his life as a story. According to her, someone else who can recollect and repeat the story in imagination must tell each story and this recollection and repetition holds people together in a community of distinct and unique individuals. In telling these stories, one comes to understand human existence. In telling stories people are also loyal to life and show themselves to be worthy of life by pondering life (in Johnson 2001).

Arendt (1968) functions as a storyteller and so emphasises that the role of the political historian, and perhaps also of the philosopher, is to be a storyteller. She gathers together accounts of the actions of keen people, many of whom were her friends, by telling their stories, and this enables her to acknowledge the meaningfulness of their lives. She maintains that the meaning of a committed act is revealed only when the action itself has come to an end and become a story susceptible to narrative.

In developing her narratives Arendt emphasises the importance of reconciliation to what life gives. Human stories according to her are not fictions that distort the realities of life; rather, stories provide meaning with permanence, with a possibility of survival. In each case, she focuses on the light that each person kindled to help one understand human existence. The stories of these people disclose possibilities for achieving humanness, even in dark times.

In school, learners' stories will play a significant role. If teachers, for example, could start with indigenous knowledge systems which provide the framework of their learners' initial experiences, then learners would be encouraged to draw on their cultural practices and daily experiences as they negotiate new situations (Higgs & Van Niekerk 2002: 42). A pluralistic view of the philosophy of life and cultural background of the various groups in an integrated school setting is of utmost importance to solve problems and to co-exist in a meaningful way. Therefore teachers in South African schools should be encouraged to broaden their cultural way of life i.e. the storytelling culture.

5.6.2 Group consensus

Group consensus is seen as a driving force behind the deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) model in schools. It is a group process, hence the input of everyone is carefully considered and an outcome is crafted that best meets the needs of the group. French and Bell (1995: 10) maintain that seeking consensus decisions is important when the success of a task depends on coordinated action by all. According to them, people are more likely to understand the implications of the decision when they have committed themselves publicly to shouldering their parts of the task. For example, when one consents to a decision, one is giving his/her permission to the group to go ahead with the decision.

In school governance, the heart of consensus should be a co-operant intent where the members are willing to work together to find the solution that meets the needs of that particular group. In a consensus process the members come together to find or create the best solutions by working together. Young's ideas on rhetoric will help stakeholders to engage with each other in a meaningful and fruitful manner, because as they engage with each other in debate, deliberative democratic school governance is enhanced.

Furthermore, consensus in school governance could be reached when all members have been heard through meetings that are frank and honest. During these meetings, the dialogue must allow for all views to be presented and considered and all available information shared among all the members. At the same time, all members of the executive team should feel that they own the team's decision, and all members must agree to support the decision even if it is not exactly what a specific member wanted.

By using this strategy in school governance, members will be able to extend their relationship to each other as part of the listening and talking process. What will be required of the stakeholders is that they will need to take time and effort, communication and a willingness to trust others. It is believed that listening will build their trust and the bonds between each and every stakeholder. Moreover, for consensus to work, a large majority of the membership needs to be present for the discussion phase of the decision.

If there is a strong hierarchy in the group, for example a dominant stakeholder, it can affect other stakeholders' willingness to bring up all the ideas, especially those that might run counter to the opinion. A key element to making consensus work is consensus decision-making. Achieving consensus requires serious treatment of every group member's considered opinion. Once a decision is made

it is important to trust in members' discretion. Those who wish to take up some action want to hear those who oppose it, in the ideal case, because they count on the fact that the ensuing debate will improve the consensus.

5.6.3 Group inclusion

Consensus usually involves collaboration. By encouraging group consensus and inclusion learners will participate in school governance and in school life to the best of their abilities. Recognising group inclusion in education is one aspect of deliberative democratic school governance. The essence of participation is inclusion, both in terms of opportunity to make substantive contributions to decision-making processes and in terms of the effect of those contributions. In deliberative democratic school governance this will mean valuing learners and other stakeholders equally.

Group inclusive strategy is not intended to be confined to school governance only, but is also intended to increase the participation of learners in, and reduce their exclusion from, the school community, curricula and communities of local schools. If this could be taken seriously by stakeholders, it will help in restructuring the cultures, policies and practices in schools, and stakeholders will respond to the diversity of learners in the community. By fostering these mutually sustaining relationships between school and communities, the culture of schooling, teaching and learning will also be improved.

Inclusion and democracy broaden the understanding of democratic participation, hence the inclusion of all stakeholders involved will be a valuable strategy in deliberative democratic school governance. Young (2000) has described ways in which deliberative democracy could be used to widen democratic inclusion and break the cycle of political inequality. She argues that participants should not put their differences aside to invoke a common goal, but rather different social segments in society should struggle through discussion by engaging with one

another across their differences. In the process she calls for the inclusion of individuals and/or groups who will be affected by the policy decision under consideration as an important and necessary requirement to achieve true democratic legitimacy. She also suggests that, in order to achieve inclusion, there must be consensus (Young 2000: 3).

The benefits of group inclusion for school governance will restrict discrimination of one group by another as familiarity and tolerance reduces fear and rejection. Inclusive participation will also contribute to greater equality of opportunities for all members of the school community as each stakeholder will make better judged decisions and take other people's views more seriously and much more into account. Furthermore, the notion of good governance includes the premise that simple majoritarian decision-making is not always sufficient as in most cases it excludes the others. Strategies such as deliberative democratic school governance will accommodate minority concerns because meaningful opportunities to exercise minority rights require specific steps to be taken, more especially in the structure such as school governance.

Inclusion of all stakeholders is a cornerstone for the success of deliberative democratic school governance as it is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. In a school, inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all stakeholders including learners. More especially it involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be 'at risk' of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement. This indicates the moral responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most at risk are carefully monitored and that, where necessary, steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement in the education system. By so doing the school will be seen as practising democracy. For inclusion of all stakeholders to be realised collaborative decision-making is important and overcoming exclusion is a challenge indeed.

5.6.4 Group collaboration

Collaboration is a strategy that has all the potential to drive the deliberative democratic school governance model forward. It is a process of participation through which people, groups and organisations work together to achieve the desired results. During this process stakeholders are brought together until a decision is developed. People tending towards a collaborative style, for example, try to meet the needs of all people involved. Such people can be highly assertive but, unlike competitors, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important.

The collaboration procedure is useful when stakeholders bring together a variety of viewpoints to get the best solution, when there have been previous conflicts in the group, or when the situation is too important to be neglected. However, the main barriers to collaboration may be the difficulty in achieving agreement when diverse viewpoints exist. This can make effective decision-making more difficult. Even if collaborative members do manage to agree, they are very likely to be agreeing from a different perspective. However, in a true collaboration, the expectations, degree of collaboration, and sometimes, level of authority will be negotiated or derived from the collaboration. For the individual, group collaboration can often offer greater access and a more powerful vehicle for change. For collaboration efforts to be successful, however, all group members must participate in the gathering and evaluating of information as well as the planning and implementation of action plans and techniques.

In school governance collaboration will allow shared leadership, decisions, and responsibility to flourish. Members of school governance will be in a better position to discover solutions and expand capacity within the school and the community. Strengthening and empowering stakeholders is aided through

cooperation and collaboration, and the effectiveness of the collaboration depends on members' commitment to the people who make up the team and to the team's success: in most cases this happens when there is good communication among members. For the school community, individual participation often results in better decisions and a better decision-making process. This could occur through self-awareness, appropriate communication and a deliberate group setup.

5.6.5 Group deliberation

As a strategy, group deliberation will rest heavily on the success of deliberative democratic school governance. A more effective and deliberative type will be group-led conversation. Discussions (conversations) that are educative, reflective, and structured promote critical thinking, engage students in social interaction, and let them take responsibility for their own consequences. Proponents of deliberation have advocated shifting from recitation to real discussion or group talk where ideas are explored.

Deliberation refers either to a particular sort of discussion – one that involves the careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against some proposition – or to an inferior process by which an individual weighs reasons for and against courses of action (Elster 1998: 63). One of the proponents of deliberative democracy is Habermas, however, Young's ideals of deliberation, most notably the goals of reciprocity and reasonableness where participants engage in public discussion, may enhance deliberative democratic participation.

Furthermore, the crucial importance of rhetoric, for Young (1996), is that it enables and ensures democratic inclusion. She believes that this could be done by listening and learning from others, and argues that deliberative democracy could be most useful in addressing difficult moral issues where there is substantial disagreement among individuals or a group. In other words,

deliberation should be used specifically for those issues that are identified as requiring struggle, since deliberative democracy calls for a more inclusive and purposeful set of representatives to engage in discussions of public importance.

The deliberative communities as advocated by Young (2000), Naussbaum (1997), Benhabib (1996), Habermas (1971) and many other theorists could be of benefit in seeking to change the reasoning of participants and school governance stakeholders in pursuing the task in hand. For example, a person committed to deliberativism as the method of social change regards it as defining a certain conception of community and the conception of the persons who are its members. They believe in achieving the requirements of democracy in their communities, which is also what I am advocating in this study.

Schools should be deliberative communities for learners and for everyone involved in order to achieve democratic participation. In school governance, for example, if learners don't take much part in a debate – in this case, a debate over school governance and the rules which govern how the members of the school community work with each other – then the value of that deliberation is lessened. It must be noted that the big changes driving school politics nowadays are profound forces such as the rise of learner assertiveness, with learners looking for more from democracy, more from politics, more from governments and the rise of scepticism, including a decline in trust among participants. In this way, the advantage of deliberation during school governance meetings will enable members to actively listen and in the process understand others' points of view. Moreover, during the process of deliberation school governance members could speak and describe their point of view while working to build a shared understanding.

Dialogue among members of school governance will be a key strategy to drive deliberation forward. Through dialogue, school governance members can

describe the kind of conversation which builds a synergistic new and better understanding of an issue and for me this will give birth to the process of accountability, more especially if stakeholders such as learners could be permitted to articulate their ideas by means of storytelling procedures. As a result of dialogue school governance members will actively listen and understand others' point of view, and this will enable them to speak and describe their point of view while working to build a shared understanding. Dialogue in decision-making can describe the kind of conversation which builds a synergistic new and better understanding of an issue, more especially if members communicate and motivate one another to voice their opinions during the process of deliberation.

5.6.6 Motivational communication

Lack of communication among school governance members is one of the contributory factors behind lack of participation in the structure of school governance. Communication is viewed as an ongoing process of sending and receiving messages that enables stakeholders to share knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Arendt (1958) argues that limitless communication means that truth can only be conceived through constant communication among members, therefore truth cannot be established or proven once and for all. For Arendt humans keep a tradition alive through communication and through such communication truth is disclosed. In the process of communication, humans can overcome what is dogmatic in their thought and way of life and retain only what is universally communicative.

Language is a basic tool for motivating communication. A linguistic community has a history and various traditions (of morality and reasoning) which inform the narratives of individual lives. Since language is a determinant of a particular outlook, it is one significant factor that will shape deliberative democratic school governance. Languages embody distinctive ways of experiencing the world and so play a crucial role in defining the experiences of a community as their

particular experiences. School governance speakers during meetings will communicate with one another about their common history and have access to the significance of events in it in a way not communicable to non-speakers, or in other languages. This means that language is never just a neutral medium for communication or for identifying the contents of actions, but rather language itself is content, a valuable laden reference for communal loyalties and animosities.

This basic thesis describes a linguistic community. A linguistic community has a history and various traditions (of morality and reasoning) which inform the narratives of individual lives and link them to those of their ancestors. Languages therefore embody distinctive ways of experiencing the world and so play a crucial role in defining the experiences of a community as their particular experiences. Since language is a determinant of a particular outlook, it is one significant factor that shapes a way of life. Speakers communicate with one another about their common history and have access to the significance of events in it in a way not communicable to non-speakers, or in other languages.

This means that language is never just a neutral medium for communication or for identifying the contents of actions rather language itself is content, a valuable -laden reference for communal loyalties and animosities. It is very important to gain knowledge by listening to your fellow human beings. Information flow through proper communication cannot be separated from the decision-making process. It is therefore crucial for schools which are striving to create a democratic ethos that there is a commitment to sharing as much information as possible. When one listens to stakeholders one will learn more than he/she ever imagined possible. When they listen, and when they communicate their understanding of what they have heard, they will see that they are recognised as valuable partners in the business, and this process creates transparency in the school, where access to decisions on the part of learners is a priority.

Motivational communication is likely to encourage commitment to seeing decisions through, because people have felt empowered by their knowledge of the situation and participation in the decision-making process. Within members of school governance, communication is the ultimate goal for deliberative democratic school governance and is the heart and soul of motivating stakeholders. However, communicating with other members is the most difficult aspect for most members of organisations. The simple act of listening and communicating back to members will bring more highly motivated members as well as school community members who will begin to think more creatively and more strategically.

People who communicate with each other do not abolish cultural and individual differences; rather, this process of communication will enable members of school governance to take joy in living in the midst of such difference and in the process of managing conflict to the best of their ability. An important component of motivational communicating is the ability to have the group reach consensus. The ability to foster honest dialogue and to reach consensus on the best course of action will be critical to the success of learner participation and to the success of democratic school governance. Where there is good communication no one will be excluded from participating in the discussion on topics relevant to her/him, and no relevant information will be omitted for anyone who is a member of school governance. As the stakeholders work together, the members build trust and communication skills as well as learn how to manage conflict well.

5.6.7 Conflict management

Conflict management could be one of the best strategies behind deliberative democratic school governance because if conflict is not handled effectively, the results can be damaging and conflicting goals can quickly turn into personal dislike. Applying conflict resolution techniques to school governance will provide

space for these tensions identified above and will allow high emotions to be dealt with more constructively before they lead to unmanageable and often violent situations. Creative problem-solving strategies are therefore essential to positive approaches to conflict management.

In the structure of school governance resolving conflict successfully will enable stakeholders to solve many problems by increasing their levels of understanding, increasing group cohesion and improving their self-knowledge. By increasing understanding I mean that the discussion will need to resolve conflict, expands peoples' awareness of the situation, and in the process give them an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of other people. By increasing group cohesion I mean that when conflict is resolved effectively, team members can develop stronger mutual respect, and renewed faith in their ability to work together. By improving self-knowledge, conflict pushes individuals to examine their goals in close detail, helping them understand the things that are most important to them, sharpening their focus, and enhancing their effectiveness.

Conflict resolution training interventions may be designed to have an impact on the level of societal tension and latent conflicts as well as on individual disputes. Applying conflict resolution techniques to school governance complaints or disputes seeks to reconcile the opposing needs of parties concerned. It further seeks to facilitate dialogue between parties in conflict and focuses on creating a safe space for negotiating substantive issues. Its emphasis on non-violent resolution of disputes and the need for inclusive processes mean that deliberative democratic school governance values are the core of conflict resolution.

It is very important that members become aware that in conflict resolution everyone has a voice, and that all voices must be heard, including those which

are critical, dismissive or unpleasant. This echoes the values of respect, participation and freedom of expression, all of which are values on which human rights are based. Conflict resolution approaches to handling and resolving school governance violations and complaints have an added benefit in that they reduce delays in the finalisation of disputes.

The flexibility of conflict resolution mechanisms implies that deliberative democratic school governance has the flexibility to design intervention techniques that respond to the complexity of every specific dispute. Parties to the conflict are offered a wide variety of opportunities and options to resolve their concerns before resorting to violence, and thus deliberative democratic school governance may provide increased and easier access to justice to the discriminated and most vulnerable group of people including learners. Conflict resolution mechanisms such as mediation and conciliation will offer speedier and possibly more accessible forums for resolving disputes amicably, more especially if those members who cannot articulate themselves properly could be allowed to express themselves using stories to make their point.

5.7 Conclusion

The summary of findings revealed six problem areas that had emerged from the data which shows that the situation in the structure of school governance is far from defensible. Learners in the structure of school governance are used to endorse or rubber-stamp all kinds of decisions that other stakeholders intend to implement as policies or as practice in the school. A new model of democratic school governance, to be known as 'deliberative democratic school governance' (DDSG), has been suggested so as to bring some kind of solution to school governance problems already outlined in the chapter. To back up my theoretical argument I used characteristic features of deliberative democratic theory plus elements of *ubuntu* to argue for deliberative democratic school governance. With these concepts put into practice in school governance and in schools at large, I

believe that deliberative democratic school governance will be practised in schools and justice on the part of learners will prevail.

Democratic decisions are considered more legitimate if there is agreement that all the relevant voices are equally heard. The democratic practice in school governance is not democracy through representation, but a place where every learner representative has the right to voice his or her opinion and be listened to before a decision is taken. Learners, as well as other stakeholders, need to realise that their words and actions are important to others because they affect other lives, feelings, and self-image, and as argued in this chapter this could be obtained by deliberative democratic practices in schools.

Nurturing a deliberative democratic school governance culture with elements of *ubuntu* will have the effect of enabling young South Africans to become open, curious and empowered citizens. Communication and participation are two mainstays of the democratic process and no democratic society, school or institution can function without them, and without the accountability, responsibility, and respect that accompanies them. However, the journey must begin by incorporating learner voices into the governance of schools. It will only be by recognising the need for new ways of thinking about how we build the common good in a world of constant change that our democracy will survive.

I believe that a deliberative democratic school governance approach will reach an ideal situation if it satisfies the following formal conditions: (a) it is inclusive (i.e. no one is excluded from participating in the discussion on topics relevant to her/him, and no relevant information is omitted), (b) it is coercion-free (i.e. everyone engages in arguments freely, without being dominated or feeling intimidated by other participants), and (c) it is open (each participant can initiate, continue, and question the discussion on any relevant topic, including the formulation of policies and procedures).

One way to achieve this is to adopt deliberative democracy for deliberative democratic school governance to enhance and develop a culture of learner leadership and distributed leadership in schools where learners are able to reclaim their voices and where educators are also able to regain their legitimacy. When applied in schools the notion of deliberative democratic participation should embrace all these categories.

The next chapter discusses the implications of deliberative democratic school governance strategies. It argues that, through this form of school governance, stakeholders will be able to listen to stories of other members; those who have problems of articulating themselves in public, such as learners, will become confident about standing up in the presence of other stakeholders, narrating their stories and arguing convincingly in public; each stakeholder will offer reasons and justification for the point he/she raised or raised by other participants; there will be collaboration, inclusion, working together as partners and disagreements will be worked out amicably. Above all, school governance members will become defensibly deliberative.

CHAPTER 6

IMPLICATIONS OF DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRACY FOR SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

6.1 Introduction

The first section of this chapter provides a synopsis of the whole study by drawing conclusions from the findings and offering possibilities for integrating Africanisation with democratic participation which I believe will help inform life in the structure of school governance. I argue for African principles to be merged with deliberative democratic principles for better and comprehensive school governance in order to create conditions conducive for effective pedagogy in the classrooms and for an inclusive climate to prevail in the school community at large.

The second section presents a critique of the study and implications of the previous chapter for school governance in South Africa. The key implications and success for teaching and learning, governance, management and for those involved in school governance lie in recognising the existence of the already mentioned existing feelings and reactions, in anticipating and in planning effective ways of coping with them.

The last section provides a defensible understanding of school governance and further explores the implications of a deliberative democratic understanding of school governance for teaching and learning (pedagogy) and school management. This will best be achieved by answering the following questions: what will be the impact/effects of deliberative democratic school governance for school leadership, governance and management, and for stakeholders such as parents, educators and learners, and teaching and learning? What would the

envisaged classroom and school environment be like after the integrative process? After these envisaged questions, I give a summary of the whole study with a comprehensive picture of each chapter.

6.2 Synopsis of the study

The South African Schools Act of 1996 proclaimed that all public schools in South Africa must have governing bodies composed of parents, teachers, learners and non-teaching staff. One of the main reasons for adopting such structures was set out in the government White Paper which preceded the Act, which states that: "A school governance structure should involve all stakeholder groups, in active and responsible roles, encourage tolerance, rational discussion and collective decision making" (Department of Education, 1996a: 16).

However, this is not the case in most South African black secondary schools, particularly black schools in the Eastern Cape Province where I reside. The study which I conducted revealed that even during this democratic era, learners are not afforded equal opportunities to participate meaningfully with other stakeholders in decision-making in school governance. Moreover, this is not something new as the question of learner participation in school governance has been a problematic issue for many decades. According to Sithole (1998: 107), democratic school governance emphasises that decisions must be based on consultation, collaboration, co-operation, partnership, mutual trust and participation of all affected parties in the school community.

When considering the role of learners, as key stakeholders in governance, meaningful learner involvement implies something more. Yet the irony that emanated from this study is that, although the democratisation of school governance has given all stakeholders a powerful voice in school affairs, learners' voices are, seemingly, being silenced. It was evident that learners are still merely

given a semblance of authority while real power remains securely anchored with the principals, teachers and parents.

My main objective for conducting this study was a desire to create educational and political reality at school level, with special emphasis on SGBs, by studying the attributes and behaviour of the key stakeholders, that is, student-teacher relationships. This study was an attempt towards that direction, with specific focus on the role of learners in the governance at secondary schools. The potential, limitations, constraints, consequences and challenges facing learners in the SGB structure needed to be revealed and debated. This study has attempted to contribute to that debate.

A critical approach has been adopted for this study. I was inspired by critical theory because it does not take things for granted or accept things at face value. It questions and carries with it a number of assumptions about what needs to be done in attempting to resolve the problem at hand. It concerns itself with marginalised and excluded people, and strives to promote peace. Learners, for example, are part of SGBs. Using a critical approach I have not just accepted that all is well because the constitution says so. I needed to closely monitor the SGB process by looking at it with an open mind and critical eye, interrogating the procedures and identifying some anomalies, as I assumed that there were those who were and still are dominated or oppressed in the structure. Then, as my assumptions were proven correct, I tried to address this situation by delving into this matter and devising a strategy to help promote justice within schools and SGBs.

The liberal theoretical framework was adopted for this study and it was informed by the work of Jürgen Habermas (1996), Freire (1972), Iris Marion Young (1990, 1996), John Rawls (1972) and Seyla Benhabib (1996) among others. A discussion of the ideas of these theorists was intended to pave the way for my

argument in defence of increased democratic participation, which could positively influence life in SGBs. I contended that some of the answers emanating from the research question could best be tackled by adopting arguments from these thinkers. Based on my theoretical framework, the question this study sought to pursue is “What idea of democratic participation could prevent the exclusion of learner voices in SGBs?”

In order to establish reasons behind the lack of meaningful learner participation in school governance, three distinct and inseparable methods of inquiry – conceptual analysis, deconstructive analysis and the use of narratives – were used. The results obtained indicated that learner democratic participation and experience in school governance was characterised by lack of freedom, lack of equality, lack of fair opportunities, manipulation of individual rights, lack of free development of all members, domination of social and cultural traditions, manipulation, deception, coercion, illegitimate decision-making, misuse of the majority rule principle and, to my surprise, by confidence and visionary expectation of learners in school governance and beyond.

After the deconstructing process, six problem areas emerged strongly from the data. From the findings it became obvious that there was no democratic participation in the structure of school governance, and that the deliberative democracy I have advocated throughout this study was not practised by school governing bodies (stakeholders), in other words, there was a lack of democratic engagement in the structure of school governance. The school governance itself was characterised by lack of justice on the part of stakeholders, learners were not being prepared to be tomorrow’s citizens, and stakeholders lack the African spirit of *ubuntu*.

In attempting to resolve the problem, I then suggested a new model of democratic school governance to be known as ‘deliberative democratic school

governance' (DDSG), which I hope will offer a solution to the school governance problems outlined above. For deliberative democratic school governance to be realised, some of the liberal concepts have been taken into consideration, such as consensus, communicative action, rationality, inclusion, reciprocity, narratives, democratic reflexivity, deliberation and reasoning, reflective equilibrium, principles of justice and respect.

I strongly believe that, with the above concepts put into practice in school governance and in schools at large, deliberative democracy will be practised by school governance stakeholders, democratic participation will be realised, stakeholders will uphold the African spirit of *ubuntu*, learners will be prepared to be tomorrow's citizens, conditions for democratic engagement in the structure of school governance will be created and opportunities for democratic justice will prevail in the structure of school governance and in society at large. I had also argued for the African principles, such as spirit of *ubuntu*, to be fused with deliberative democratic participation for deliberative democratic school governance to be effective. This was done by forging some of the African ways of approach, to enable some solutions to be advocated using African methods of doing things.

It became evident that, even though some of the liberal democratic principles have been successful, others had not made inroads and found plausible solutions to the South African governance crisis, hence the idea and recommendation that the integrity of the democratic process could only be sustained by weaving together Africanisation of democratic participation as advocated by African philosophers with that of the philosophers of the world.

I now move on to introduce the African debate which I hope will shed some light on why I opt for the inclusion of African principles in deliberative democratic school governance.

6.3 Africanisation of democratic participation

Firstly, a dominant feature of philosophy which is proposed by deliberative democrats is the theory of rationality. For western philosophers, rationality is seen as the only avenue towards reliable knowledge and also as being certain of success in yielding correct, final answers. This has been seen as a universal inherent ability of humankind to determine the truth. According to this theory, rationality is based upon logical deduction and strict rules of evidence, and for deliberative democrats the distorting tendencies of effect must be avoided at all costs (Teffo & Roux 2002: 162).

A counter argument to this view is the one put forward by Higgs (1997), who posits that reason is neither necessary nor universal, nor is it arbitrary, for it emerges in plural conversations, in which people together inquire, disagree, explain, or argue their views in the pursuit of a consensual outcome. Such an outcome is one that the participants, after careful deliberation of different opinions and alternative perspectives, are satisfied with for that moment in time (Higgs 1997: 7).

This is not how Africans pursue the idea of rationality (reasoning). Teffo and Roux (2002) maintain that perceptions in Africa are influenced by expectations, beliefs, and emotions, but also by our conceptual schemes, our histories and social circumstances and the language we talk. That is to say, the conception of the nature of reality varies from culture to culture, almost suggesting that different cultural communities live in different worlds.

Generally speaking, metaphysical thinking in Africa has features which make it a particular way of conceptualising reality and this must be based on the African perception of reality as determined by history, geographical circumstances, and

such cultural phenomena as religion, thought systems and linguistic conventions entrenched in the African world view. This implies that most metaphysical discourses on the continent have certain common features.

Teffo and Roux (2002: 221) further argue that African rationality is closely connected to knowledge. Unless we have a true and reliable picture of how things are in the world around us – unless, that is, we have knowledge of the world – we are unlikely to have much success in acting. Rationality of the kind which we humans strive for is epistemic rationality, or rationality which aims at the truth and is based on knowledge.

Furthermore, rationality is also closely connected to the idea of justification. If someone is rational in a belief or action or assertion, then that person is able to say why he or she believes (or acts or states) as he or she does. To say why, is to give one's reasons or justification. If you believe (or do or say) something for no reason at all – if, on reflection, you just cannot find any reason to explain why you believe as you do, then you will know that your belief is irrational (Teffo & Roux 2002).

Teffo and Roux (2002: 222) further assert that social epistemology, that is, epistemology deliberately situated in a particular cultural context, as African epistemology is, has an active role to play with regard to rationality. According to them it is up to the philosophers to develop and exercise the concept of rationality appropriate to his or her society, to have a critical awareness of the intellectual and cognitive traditions of both his or her own society and other societies. Furthermore, they assert that when different cultures meet and mingle, people automatically become aware of different sets of values and customs, of different conceptual possibilities. They then become aware of the fact that their own cultural background is no longer the only one available to them (Teffo & Roux 2002: 228).

Secondly, persuasion as propagated by western scholarship is not enough. Here the African philosophy is that you argue and communicate until a consensus is reached, and the only condition for such a discussion is the possibility of communication. Arendt (in Johnson 2001: 162) argues that communication can never be guaranteed, even among people with the same conceptual scheme. Here, miscommunication, and thus explanation and correction, is always possible.

If, for example, the will to communicate is there, it is possible to cross even conceptual divides. Given this view of rationality and the logical possibility of open communication, such discussion, and particularly a cross cultural discussion, is possible, but what is important is that it is essential, because no one claims that he/she is in possession of the truth. Such views cannot be ignored because they also come into play when issues such as education, government, and legislation are discussed.

Limitless communication means that truth can only be conceived through constant communication; therefore truth cannot be established or proven once and for all. Humans keep a tradition alive through communication and through such communication truth is disclosed. In the process of such communication, humans can overcome what is dogmatic in their thought and ways of life and retain only what is universally communicative.

This does not mean that what remains is a single, rigid framework. People communicate with each other and this will not abolish cultural and individual differences. Rather, this communication will enable people to take joy in living in the midst of such difference. Arendt's work points to the importance of language and of what she calls, in accord with Heidegger, "the gift of thinking poetically".

Thinking poetically helps humans make new connections that provide the possibility of transfiguring human existence (Johnson 2001: 59).

Thirdly, inclusion in an African way of life is a process. That is to say, it is not simply a matter of setting and achieving a few targets and then the job is complete: in practice, the job will never be complete. Rather inclusion has to be seen as a never-ending research to find better ways of responding to diversity. It is about learning how to live with difference and how to learn from difference. In this way, differences come to be seen more positively as a stimulus for fostering learning, amongst both children and adults.

According to Julie Allan (2003: 174), inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers. Consequently, it involves collecting, collating and evaluating information from a wide variety of sources in order to plan for improvements in policy and practice. It is about using evidence of various kinds to stimulate creativity and problem-solving. Allan further believes that inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all. Here 'presence' is concerned with where children are educated, and how reliably and punctually they attend. However, inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalisation, exclusion or underachievement, and this is a matter of human rights. Moreover, inclusion is about listening to the views and ideas of others by means of storytelling in their mother tongue.

Fourthly, for Arendt narrative is more able to help us think about our experiences than is theory. Stories help all humans find meaning and help us find that meaning together in our plurality. Arendt further explains the importance of storytelling in relationship to action. According to her, stories arise out of human plurality, out of what Arendt calls the web of human relationships. She describes this web as consisting of conflicting wills and intentions. Because of this, stories

are not the work of an individual person. She also asserts that a story appears to many people, not simply to the actor in the story.

According to Arendt, stories enable people to speak and act together and to appear to each other. In her book she says of Dinesen, that stories saved her life. For her, the story reveals the meaning of what otherwise would remain an unbearable sequence of sheer happenings. Furthermore she asserts that stories can disclose meaning without confining that meaning to set definitions. Although each person's life may contain a story, no one can live her or his life as a story. Someone else who can recollect and repeat the story in imagination must tell each story. According to her, this recollection and repetition holds people together in a community of distinct and unique individuals. "We can only tell the other's story, not our own" (in Johnson 2001). In telling these stories, we come to understand human existence. In telling stories people are also loyal to life, that is, they show themselves to be worthy of life by pondering life (Johnson 2001).

In Men in Dark Times (1968), Arendt functions as a storyteller and so emphasises that the role of the political historian, and perhaps also of the philosopher, is to be a storyteller. She gathers together accounts of the actions of keen people, many of whom were her friends, by telling their stories; she is loyal to these people. Telling their stories also enables her to acknowledge the meaningfulness of these lives. She says that the meaning of a committed act is revealed only when the action itself has come to an end and becomes a story susceptible to narrative.

In developing her narratives Arendt (1958) also emphasises the importance of reconciliation to what life gives. Human stories according to her are not fictions that distort the realities of life; rather, stories provide meaning with permanence, with a possibility of survival. In each case, she focuses on the light that each

person kindled to help us understand human existence. The stories of these people disclose possibilities for achieving humanness, even in dark times.

Fifthly, Arendt argues that in the twentieth century, human rights are lost because these rights are dissociated from political identity. Her experience of being a person without citizenship, and so without rights, leads her to maintain that there are no human rights for those who do not have political identity. She believes that humans are not equal because of their mere humanness. Indeed, Arendt maintains that when all that a person has is his or her humanness, it is difficult for others to treat that person as human. According to Arendt, in contemporary times, those who live on the street serve as examples to support her analysis. Street people have nothing but their humanity. They have few, if any, possessions and nowhere to live. It would seem that this bare humanity would arouse the deep compassion of others. Instead, their mere humanity makes it difficult for others to see and to treat them as human. Only when advocacy groups argue for the right of such people is their human equality acknowledged. Arendt writes:

‘We are not born equal’, we become equal as members of a group on the strength of our decision to guarantee ourselves mutually equal rights. When people are excluded from equal rights, they are cast out of their common world (in Johnson 2001: 456).

Arendt argues that this results in an internal danger for the very civilisation that reduces these people to their mere humanity. She understands humanity as a principle that directs us not because of suffering, and the relief of suffering where it occurs, but as a leading member of a family of principles concerned with what happens to people, with aspects such as welfare, happiness, self-fulfillment, freedom, and satisfaction of basic needs. Justice, by contrast, is not

directly concerned with such matters at all and humanity is about doing good Arendt believes.

In reality, this is how things are done in the African context. For example, speaking loudly in public may be regarded as bad manners in Western culture, whereas it is viewed as the opposite in an African context because it ensures all listeners that no gossip is taking place. In African culture it is bad manners to look directly into the face of a person to whom one owes respect, whereas in Western culture the contrary is the norm. Nevertheless, I am not advocating throwing away or deliberately neglecting deliberative democratic theories, or Western culture for that matter, for it has had a persuasive value generally and in school governance structures in particular, but it could have a more binding effect if the African aspect is infused.

I now move to examine the question of an African perspective of democratic participation. The question is: how would an African way of doing things boost deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) and improve democratic participation in school governance?

6.3.1 Integrating Africanisation with democratic participation

Within the African community, we have the cohesive factors of the society that in the African sense bind the community together. These factors include, inter alia, consensus as a decision-making process, moral values, tolerance, respect, participation, inclusive decision-making, and storytelling, to mention but a few. Much has been made in South Africa/Africa of the differences between Western and African systems of thought, partly as a way for Africans to reclaim the beauty of their heritage. To mention but a few, African culture honours the dream and intuition as repositories of wisdom whereas in Western culture it is mostly acquired knowledge that commands respect. These values are so deeply

rooted in Africans that they find it difficult to sever a connection with them. Such values reflect a more communitarian jurisprudential approach, in which individuals are seen in relationship to others.

Firstly, the search for educational identity in South Africa and South African schools requires all participants in the discourse to seek consensus. The belief in consensus as a decision-making procedure is apparently widespread in African traditional life. For Africans, it is only with respect to more serious problems that special meetings are called, but even so, the approach followed for addressing such serious problems is one reminiscent of what is described above. At these African meetings, ideas are shared and collectively higher order levels of understanding are arrived at.

The real value of these meetings lies in the discussions and critical reflections which take place, and is based on respect for each other's contributions and personal integrity. The main characteristic of these deliberations is a lengthy testing of opinions, but differences would generally be aired with reserve. The meetings continue until some kind of consensus is reached, and they sometimes end in unanimity or not at all. Unanimity, however, might be an agreement to disagree, or to wait for a more propitious time to propose a solution. The most important thing is that a minority is not to be crushed by a majority as decisions are taken collectively as a group and not as individuals.

Secondly, in an African context, the history of a person's life is the story of his or her transactions with the community's material and moral worlds, which, in effect, is the story of his or her relations with particular sets of social goods. According to this social thesis, an individual's choice of way of life is a choice constrained by the community's pursuit of shared ends. This pursuit of the common good is the primary goal of the community and always takes precedence over the pursuit of individually chosen ends. In this sense the child is

held to be the property of the community and it is the community members who are going to see to it that the individual child becomes a significant member of that particular community, an asset to all.

Furthermore, the common good is conceived of as a good which fits the patterns of preferences of individual members: it is not a single good but many goods, each fitting a sphere of social life and resting on a consensus (agreement) about the good life identified for application in specific social contexts. The good life for an individual is conceived of as coinciding with the good of the community, and a person's choice is highly or lowly ranked as it contributes to or detracts from the common good of that particular community.

Thirdly, morality is absolutely essential to society. The notion of remaining in touch in a community is not merely a sociological notion but a moral one. Morality in this sense is simply the observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interest of the individuals to those of others in society. A richer concept of morality even more pertinent to human flourishing will have an essential reference to that special kind of motivation called the sense of duty. Whenever it is practised, different peoples, groups and individuals have a different understanding of it.

However, the combined impact in a society should give a distinctive impression of its morals. This implies certain chosen attitudes on my part and certain qualities in the relationships I have with others. In other words, I am able to be myself by being recognised, by being known and accepted by other members of the family. Through their knowledge and acceptance of me I am enabled to discover my own identity while at the same time making it my own. This is what is called 'shared understandings' i.e. understanding things in the same ways that African communities do.

It must be noted, however, that while not all that is common could be common to all members of a social group, the understandings have a moral force. The understandings people share are just descriptions of the way things are done or ideas about ways things can be done. They also contain a 'prescriptive' element, by which I mean that something positive must be done, i.e. the shared understandings tell people what things should be like and how things ought to be done rather than simply stating what they are like and how they can be done.

Fourthly, African people share some sort of understanding among each other. For people to share understandings, they must somehow be transmitted from person to person which is the origin of African culture in the oral tradition. Generally, social activities can only occur when those involved in them share at least some common understanding of what is going on and how everyone should act. The only way they get these essential understandings is through learning.

In an African communal setting, the sorts of shared understandings concerning how things should be done are called 'procedural understandings'. These are understandings about the nature of the world and its contents e.g. witchcraft causes death, or disputes can be settled. Another type of shared understanding is devoted to what is desirable, beautiful, or good and what is undesirable, ugly, or bad.

These shared understandings are called 'values'. In an important sense they are basic to procedural and descriptive understandings because they are used to evaluate the other types of values and their consequences. These sorts of shared understandings, however, have moral force even when they seem to be strictly utilitarian guides from how to do things or descriptive accounts of how things are. People in various groups have means for supporting their understandings about the nature of the world and its contents.

The important point is that people hold the beliefs and think they ought to be accepted. There is no need in this context to try to adopt standards for differentiating among different beliefs or different means for supporting those beliefs, although this can be done. However, this does not disrupt group life so long as there are linking understandings shared between members of subgroups that make it possible for people to know what to expect from members of social groupings to which they do not belong. Even when understandings are shared throughout the group, they are not necessarily followed by everyone all the time or in the same way.

Fifthly, in an African context, behaviour must be sufficiently predictable for most people to have some idea of what most of those with whom they associate will do under most circumstances. In this sense, social relations are internalised in the extended family and when in contact with distant relatives or friends. Such groups form a closely knit social web which brings about solidarity between persons. This constitutes the consciousness of social responsibility. Nobody should be rejected or condemned as worthless. In this way African societal life accommodates all contingencies of human character and social, economic and political disasters.

A good example is how knowledge was (and still is) constructed in indigenous African settings whereby people come together whenever problems arise, and ideas are shared, solutions are sought and found by all community members in a given real-life situation. There was (and still is in some rural areas) a tradition of eating together, particularly at the end of the day, in the evenings, whereby members of an extended family bring food from their various households to the most senior member of the family and eat together.

Furthermore, apart from serving a social responsibility function of ensuring that nobody is hungry on a particular day because there is no food in his/her

household, these eating places provide the people with excellent forums and opportunities for sharing ideas and reflecting on the events of the day, and on any other issues as they arise. In this way, solutions to many routine problems are worked out, and strategies for addressing new problems are jointly conceived and implemented, which is opposite to a voting process.

Sixthly, one of the enduring ways in which traditional African societies instil desirable attitudes, dispositions and habits in their youngsters is through storytelling. A great deal of philosophical material is embedded in proverbs, myths and folktales, folksongs, rituals, beliefs, customs, and traditions of the people. In a school situation learners should learn to tell their own stories, as well as to listen to others' stories. This basic thesis describes a linguistic community.

A linguistic community has a history and various traditions (of morality and reasoning) which inform the narratives of individual lives and link them to those of their ancestors. Languages therefore embody distinctive ways of experiencing the world and so play a crucial role in defining the experiences of a community as their particular experiences. Since language is a determinant of a particular outlook, it is a significant factor that shapes a way of life. Speakers communicate with one another about their common history and have access to the significance of events in it in a way not communicable to non-speakers, or in other languages. This means that language is never just a neutral medium for communication or for identifying the contents of actions, rather language itself is content, a valuable laden reference for communal loyalties and animosities.

Problem-solving in African culture is through dialogue and sharing of experiences. The process of dialogue entails the suspension of assumptions and pre-conceived ideas and the entering into genuine thinking together. The interaction between people is free-flowing, providing meaning and understanding

as well as a 'safe environment' within which free creative thought, ideas and vision can be expressed. Dialogue in its true sense is people learning how to learn from experience.

An outcome of this process is an increased capacity for creating thinking and problem-solving. This is in stark contrast to discussions, which are engaged in for the express purpose of coming to a decision. Public dialogue comes into existence whenever civil societies engage in debate, i.e. whenever they evaluate the validity of the social and political norms by which they live. There may be as many civic societies as there are public dialogues, but no debate abstracts so radically as from the recognition of differences.

Parties to the debate are compelled by their language to consent to moral truths they do not hold or share. Dialogue, then, serves pragmatic ends – to identify the norms they think reasonable to abide by. Nevertheless, dialogue depends on the nature of the issues that get pushed onto the agenda of the public dialogue. There are matters fit for public and not for private debate. Indeed, where the boundary is drawn is a matter for negotiation, which rests on mutual consent. The question now is: how will all this relate to school governance?

6.4 African implications for schools and school governance

At the heart of Africanisation of deliberative democratic school governance is a vision of how educators and learners interact and the content of that interaction. Central to the African view is the idea that learning instruction must be built on learners' out-of-school experience, and so educators need to allow their learners to use these experiences as the starting point for learning. In cases of governance and management, learners have ideas of how their homes are managed and they are taught by parents and community members how to do

and not to do certain things. All these experiences will need to be taken into consideration by school stakeholders.

Having these black African values, ethos, beliefs and behaviours in mind, educators will be able to encourage learners to use their personal experiences to make sense of governance and classroom content. To be able to build on their knowledge and personal experience, educators will then allow learners opportunities to actively direct their own learning. Moreover, helping learners to build on their knowledge base is facilitated when educators learn more about their learners' home cultures and adapt their teaching approach to incorporate their cultural characteristics. This I believe will not be difficult in black schools, more especially where I reside, as educators are also parents of these learners and moreover they are part of these societal values and culture.

Making school relevant to learners' real lives is especially important for deliberative democratic school governance. For teaching and learning to change in these ways clearly requires the breaking of the artificial barriers between the classroom and the home. Learners need to understand the value of out-of-school experience (home) and feel free to bring those experiences into the classroom and school environment. For example, parents cannot remain ignorant of what takes place in classrooms if they are to facilitate their children's learning at home. Educators and school management cannot remain ignorant of learners' home lives if they are to structure appropriate learning experiences. Stories, consensual decision making and use of dialogue is part and parcel of their daily lives. Transferring that kind of knowledge to the classroom situation and in school governance won't be difficult to achieve. In governance the use of consensus when decisions are to be solicited at home and in the community is what they are used to.

The destruction of these barriers between school and learners' homes will require a new openness to communicate, to create opportunities for families to spend more time in the school, and for school staff members to spend more time in the community. This is not easily accomplished, but is far from impossible. Here the community will be viewed as a resource to be used to help learners learn important concepts in ways that send learners, educators and parents alike, a positive message about the value of schooling and the work of the community.

The implications of such shifts in the traditional structure of schools for bridging the gap between the school and the community will be clear. Educators will be free to leave the school building to promote educational activities for their learners and parents in their communities. Such steps will increase the opportunity for community members to become acquainted with the schools, as well as for educators to know the community better. At the same time, by restructuring schools to meet the broader needs of learners' families through the provision of non-educational services, educators and administrators will be opening their doors to the broader community and explicitly expressing their desire to help community members. Thus, restructuring in these ways can both bring the school to the community and attract the community to the school.

Furthermore, if educators in an African context could start with indigenous knowledge systems which provide the framework of their learners' initial experiences, then learners would be encouraged to draw on their cultural practices and daily experiences as they negotiate new situations. A pluralistic view of philosophy of the life and cultural background of the various groups in an integrated school setting is of utmost importance to solve problems and to co-exist in a meaningful way. Therefore educators in South African schools should be assisted to broaden their cultural perspectives.

It is a fact that failure to appreciate the role of culture has led to poor performance in education in many African countries. For example, to teach subjects such as mathematics and science within the narrow definition of Western knowledge systems and textbooks which excludes the African learners' context is to ignore what meaningful learning is all about. Sensitivity to the many cultural heritages represented in our schools and in the classroom could create understanding, mutual respect and tolerance, and learners could find meaningful ways of self-expression in order to flourish and interact with each other.

Lastly, in the African culture for example, learners are used to working in groups, not as individuals and this should be taken into account within the school and in classroom teaching. Ideas in our communities are generated by group members, by sharing their experiences. In the African context, it is very important to gain knowledge by listening to your fellow human beings. Such a relationship is the foundation of all information and knowledge.

I next discuss the limitations of this study.

6.5 Deliberative democratic school governance limitations and critics

The whole study argues for deliberative democratic participation. I know that this concept of deliberative democracy is not without critics, and objections to the idea of deliberative democracy, takes several forms. A whole school of theorists have emerged under the banner of postmodernism. Numerous theorists maintain that the idea of deliberative citizenry is just an ideal. They also argue that deliberative democrats need a far more practical and realistic approach to contemporary democratic ills. However, I am not trying to imply that deliberative democratic school governance is going to be an easy task for schools. The

attainability of this claim remains unclear, but it is a phenomenon worth attempting.

Schools may not/never achieve much more than the modest and imperfect deliberation that I have already alluded to, more especially as there are no checks and balances by the Department of Education. Some of the problems the schools may encounter will centre on the principle of reciprocity. Deliberative democrats argue for reciprocity, which I also argue for in this study. The principle of reciprocity that has been repeatedly used to back up my argument requires that participants reason beyond their narrow self-interest and consider the public good.

I am not very confident that all school stakeholders, for instance, have the ability to reason beyond their capacity. Pragmatically, reciprocal reasoning would require participants to justify their view to listeners who disagree with them. It would be a milestone to achieve this, because their justification can be taken badly especially by other participants, however it is worth a try in the structure of school governance.

I have also used the argument of deliberative democratic theorists on how unity could be achieved. Their solution to overcome the inclination to privilege unity that I have argued for is also lacking specifically in the real world, due to difference in communities and cultural practices. They argue that participants should not put their differences aside to invoke a common goal, but rather different social segments in society should struggle through discussion by engaging with one another across their differences. This also could be a milestone to achieve, more especially in communities such as schools. It could be very difficult for members to shelve their differences because in reality they are all different.

Some deliberative democrats also acknowledge that participants in the daily workings of democratic life already have low morals. Thus, one wonders how one can expect participation in processes that ask people to struggle. People nowadays do not want to struggle, and how much more in a schooling situation? In a real life situation, participants do not deliberate indefinitely as they use a combination of decision-making procedures.

Critics also argue that in such cases democratic legitimacy is maintained as long as groups believe that they have had the opportunity to influence the outcome. While this study puts forward an example of a more inclusive deliberative process, schools often lack many other ideals of deliberation, most notably the goals of reciprocity and reasonableness where participants engage in public discussion not only to express their own views, but also to listen and learn from others.

However, sometimes this can be seen as achievable, and while it may be the case that deliberation encourages a public-spirited way of talking, it is not at all clear that such talk can produce a public-spirited way of thinking, more especially if participants are cynical about motives. Other members, especially those who are less powerful, may discount public-spirited talk as a façade for self-interest. However, what will be needed will be for groups to believe that they have influenced the outcome. However, if the outcome does not act in their favour (at least in their view), as they have been given a voice in a deliberative process, will they still believe they have had the opportunity to influence the outcome? Will they still believe that deliberative struggle is worth their while?

In reality, people (more especially school stakeholders) will not engage and struggle unless they believe there is a purpose in doing so. It will not be easy to achieve successful deliberative democratic school governance in schools, because implementing changes in a system with deep historical divisions and low levels of

capacity will inevitably be a slow process when compared to the relatively easy task of designing new policies. For example, it is still usual for school principals to dominate school governance meetings and expect no one to change what they have already decided.

Furthermore, the study argues for education for democracy. Although it might seem that education for democracy should by definition be a good thing and therefore uncontroversial, the opposite is true. This whole area is highly contested and suffused with ideological debate. Democratic change has faced, and still faces, considerable political resistance in the popular understanding of what a school is, how it should be managed, and how educators should teach. The dilemma remains as to the extent to which the structures of society and formal schooling limit the growth of democracy. When one talks of democracy, the next thing one thinks of are rights. This whole study argues for rights of learners in schools and school governance, but there can be no rights without responsibilities, whether as parents, administrators, educators or learners. This is not something that is far-fetched, though, as rights are included in the South African constitution.

A right here in South Africa is classified as one of the values of democracy. A value is also a belief in action, and therefore it is a choice about what is good or bad, important or unimportant. Among the values I have referred to in the study are freedom and equality: in the new South Africa, no person is considered more important than another regardless of differences (i.e. there is freedom and equality for all). It is believed that everyone has the same freedoms, rights and opportunities and the opinions of all people matter. From these beliefs flow the following two expectations: that we should all have the right to have a say in how we are governed, as well as the right to participate in governing.

A further emphasis is that as free human beings we have certain rights and freedoms related to the value of human beings and the life, integrity and dignity of each person. Collectively, these are termed human rights, which cannot be denied to us either by our rulers or others in society, and are upheld and promoted, in a democratic system. These are entrenched or embedded in our new constitution, and include freedoms of expression, association, and assembly, and rights such as equality, education and civil disobedience. Equality might require us to put up with people who are different while maintaining attitudes of non-sexism and non-racism.

In reality this is not practical. It is true that a decision that didn't go through the ordeal of the undecidable would not be a free decision, it would only be the programmable application or unfolding of a calculable process. However, decisions are taken even when there is no consensus among various stakeholders. This means that both freedom and equality do not work in all circumstances. In the true sense these values do not hold. This argument takes me to African values such as *ubuntu*. However, *ubuntu* goes much further as it embodies the concept of mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference. It requires stakeholders to know others if they are to know themselves, and if they are to understand their place and that of others within a multicultural environment.

Critics of *ubuntu* also believe that a human being is nothing but the life he leads, and each of us can lead any life that we choose to lead outside the community. For these critics, human beings are what they make of themselves. They argue that as adults we need to be self-determining, especially in the important areas of our lives. As Africans we believe that communal values shape the behaviour of a human being. However, until a value is acted upon, it remains an inspiration. This will not be an easy task to achieve because values are hard to detect, yet they underpin organisations. However, deliberative democratic school

governance could play a significant role in improving the way of life in our schools.

6.6 Implications of deliberative democratic school governance for schools

Implementing a new strategy such as deliberative democratic school governance in a school governance structure which is perceived to be democratic by its stakeholders will not be easy; however the role of school leadership as facilitator will be of major importance. It is crystal clear that the schools need to act quickly in order to address those many causes for dissatisfaction that emanated from the data, and that both parents and educators need to keep hearing what learners think, so that schools can be fully informed about their concerns and perceived needs.

Furthermore, schools would have to change their existing strategy as democratic participation would have to become part of the fabric of the whole school, not only of governance. The search for educational identity in South Africa requires all participants in the discourse to seek deliberative democracy through deliberative democratic school governance. The consequences of an education system which has deliberately not prepared learners for the demands of citizenship must be taken seriously, and education should equip learners with the intellectual tools required in all schools. In other words, what must be taught is not just information, but also ways of working with information, or constructing knowledge.

Likewise change in thinking or in the form or structure of knowledge requires change in skilled organisations such as schools. All groups and participants will need to be conscientised and be allowed to contribute to the national and educational identity in order for it to be shared and upheld by all. This I believe

could be achieved if schools could educate learners and stakeholders about democracy through deliberative democratic school governance. However, this is not something new that a deliberative democratic school will be tasked to do. The South African Schools Act was adopted at the start of 1997 to guide our governance transformation, and it requires that members of the community, senior management teams in schools, learners, educators, non-educating staff and parents be trained for both strategic planning and management, and the management of school pedagogy. Those involved in management at all levels are expected to understand what it means to manage under democratic, fully participative conditions.

To educate about democracy is necessary but not sufficient. In a deliberative democratic school the tendency and attitude of 'business as usual', which hampers change in structures and processes, will change. Schools will be expected to provide some experience of democracy for learners, educators and parents through their decision-making structures. They will also be expected to meet the new conditions and foster a conducive culture of teaching and learning in schools based on inclusion, consensus, equality and mutual trust. Educating in a democracy for a democracy is possible, but sustaining this democracy is now the challenge.

Based partly on the argument that learners need to learn critical thinking within a real world context, educators in schools using DDSG will be tasked with a duty of designing learning experiences that take place outside of formal building e.g. writing assignments based on field experiences will be examples of appropriate out-of-school learning experiences. Again, breaking down the long standing barriers between school and community and asking educators, parents, and even learners to assume new roles will not be an easy task. The individuals closest to the learners will have to have the authority to make fundamental decisions about

how best to serve learners. The question therefore is: what contributions will DDSG have on governance and management?

6.6.1 Implications of deliberative democratic school governance for governance and management

For school governance and management, deliberative democratic school governance will not have all the answers, but will provide the best means of providing some of them. In the process it will make schools an immeasurably happier experience for everyone through its inclusive participation. In relation to both governance and management I can say that the democratic approach will need to be inclusive, and it will be inclusive if it brings together all those who are involved in the process of education to plan the best way forward, to agree on goals and to raise and maintain collective expectations.

Exclusion will need to be avoided at all cost, because it has the effect of denying others basic rights. An inclusive school and inclusive understandings of stakeholders require that both learners and educators have access to knowledge of what is going on in both governance and management and the opportunity for everyone, regardless of age or sex, to participate. Democratic school governance depends on the informed and active involvement of all its members who in turn have to be accountable to education departments and officials working within them.

Deliberative democratic school governance can help create good governance in schools by promoting trust, understanding and accountability among learners, educators, parents and the school community at large. The question of accountability is a crucial one in South African schools at present. In a schooling situation, accountability means that school leaders and groups that act on behalf of government must answer to the people for their action and policies, which should serve the interests of all. This domain of responsibility involves

accountability: having assumed authority for making key decisions, schools should be held accountable for their results. If schools have responsibility for creating the learning environment, then they are also accountable for their results to their most immediate constituents. However, accountability is only possible if there is transparency in governance.

For DDSG to be effective, everyone must be held accountable in the school. One of the reasons why education is such a hotly debated feature within social policy is that everyone in society holds a stake in it, in one way or other. Building legitimacy in the education system as a whole, and in the school itself, becomes a crucial aspect of this move towards more accountability. More especially, the constitution says that public administration, which includes the public school system, must be governed by the values and principles of professionalism, efficiency, equity, transparency, responsibility and accountability. Schools will survive, and even prosper, if communities take responsibility for them.

Deliberate democratic school governance will reshape the relationship between the community and the school in two fundamental ways. First it will create the opportunity for parents and community members to have more direct input into the decision-making process. Parents will be able to sit on, elect representatives to, and attend the meetings of the decision-making structures of the school. This same structure, however, will make the school more readily accountable to the community.

Deliberate democratic school governance will make this move possible by disseminating free, easily available information to the public, holding public meetings, and allowing observing sessions of meetings or any form of governance to take place. For example, refusing to allow other groups in the school governance structure, such as learners, to attend meetings suggests a

lack of accountability. Accountability is related to responsibility and ownership if people are involved in decision-making.

There will be more possibilities of accountability but one needs a monitoring and evaluation system and procedure to develop a culture of accountability, which is glaringly lacking in school governance and management. In other words, accountability in schools has tended to operate in one direction only, which has caused frustration and resentment among other stakeholders such as learners. Nowadays accountability is supposed to be different, but the question is, is it so? If democracy is part of our vision, we need to be thinking about accountability moving in all directions in a school community.

Accountability in the education system, more especially in governance and management, will mean institutionalising the responsibility according to codes of conduct and the meeting of formal expectations. Learners are the responsibility, within school hours, of teachers, who are in turn accountable to school governing bodies and the educational authorities, who are accountable to the broader community and to the citizens of the democratic society. Accountability in this sense means ensuring that all school governing bodies at schools become legitimate irrespective of their individual capacities and resources.

Moreover, accountability is more important than anything else. Accountability means that we are all responsible for the advancement of our nation through education and through our schools and that we are all responsible, too, to others in our society, for our individual behaviour. By means of DDSG, a firm commitment to the full democratisation of governance of schools will be made so that learners, educators and parents can take joint responsibility for creating a school in which performance and relationships are excellent. In-house training will be provided for every learner leader in which their roles, functions and

responsibilities are outlined. It is clear that stakeholder participation is critical to the successful transformation of our schools and country.

Finally, for deliberative democratic school governance and management to function properly communication and openness will need to be adhered to by management of schools, that is, the principal, the deputy principal and the school management teams. One of the main reasons for doing this will be to create a school climate which fosters greater communication and openness and which will therefore lead to greater trust and understanding and less violent conflict among stakeholders such as parents, educators and learners. This establishment of authority at the school site has implications both for the direct involvement of community members in the decision-making process and for accountability to the immediate community for the school outcomes.

I now move on to the implications of deliberative democratic school governance for all school stakeholders.

6.6.2 Implications of deliberative democratic school governance for stakeholders such as parents, educators and learners

While democracy is the cornerstone of the new South Africa and is an ideal of which the nation can be justifiably proud, it will however remain nothing more than that unless we are able to inculcate in people the day-to-day behaviours which support a truly democratic society among its stakeholders. For example, when all stakeholders see that the schools are serving their purposes, they tend to see them as their schools, and when schools have an active and explicit mandate from the public, they are more likely to be orderly and excellent.

This is what will happen when DDSG is given a chance in schools. My belief is that one of the best places to give democracy true meaning is a democratic

school environment which provides all its stakeholders with an opportunity to learn about good communication, mediation and conflict-reducing techniques, tolerance, and civic responsibility, and also a place where the effects of these values can be seen. For stakeholders such as parents, educators and learners deliberative democratic school governance will help to change their mindset and help them think constructively.

Democracy demands that the differences be confronted and talked through; they cannot be simply ignored or blamed on a remote hierarchy. Many of the difficulties encountered at the school are however avoidable. According to this study, the majority of problems arose out of an almost complete lack of knowledge, or experience among both educators and learners on how to negotiate, how to deal with disagreement courteously and how to develop the changing relationships between them. Learners in this study seem to have been taking part eagerly in the structure of school governance.

However, a difficulty which has frequently threatened the credibility of the representative council of learners and participation is the slowness of achieving change. In a school environment, learners have to be afforded an opportunity to participate in an active working democracy, a microcosm of society in which they can develop a vision for what they would like their macro society to be like. Moving authority down through school governance can work to democratise the educational decision-making process and create meaningful opportunities for learners to influence the outcomes of that process.

To achieve democracy, educators and learners need to articulate a common vision, identify aims for democratic teaching and learning, and develop and implement programmes to address them. This means that all stakeholders should be willing to practise democracy in a variety of educative contexts. This

can be achieved by modelling diversity, critical analysis social inequality and engaging in social action through curricula.

Modelling diversity can mean encouraging learners to confront and appreciate racial, gender, linguistic and social class differences in their own classrooms, as well as in the communities and the world they live in. It can also mean teaching them peacefully to resolve conflicts when diverse viewpoints are voiced. A critical examination of social inequalities and the ways in which education functions to reproduce and legitimate them should form part of the content of their learning programmes. Educators need to be given support in preparing their new roles. They will need to be given time to broaden their teaching repertoires, time to plan with other teachers, and time to participate in the decision-making process.

To transform schools, programmes that engage learners in a number of activities that promote social action for the achievement of such democratic principles of justice, equality, liberty, peace and democracy, should be implemented. Educators should be required to model democratic problem-solving and conflict resolution techniques for the classroom community through free and safe public debates, and to teach their learners to do the same. For this to occur, a positive climate, characterised by humane and caring social relationships among stakeholders, is necessary.

In the classroom, for example, all members have to be willing to listen to each other, learn each other's stories and in essence, understand what the world looks like from somebody else's viewpoint. For all stakeholders, old authoritarian habits and responses to authoritarianism have to be unlearned. If there is greater sharing of the experience of democratic schooling, and if this includes the skills of participation and strategies for teaching those skills to school learners, the path of democratisation of school governance will become very much easier in schools.

Parents will become involved in their children's education through homework, which can be a powerful tool for letting parents and other adults know what is going on at school as well as giving educators an opportunity to hear from parents about their children's learning. Involvement in learner homework can be influenced by several members of the school community, including educators and professionals who work with learners and families before and after school. Parents are often ideally positioned to act as a bridge of communication between home and school on issues related to learner learning, and in this way parents may participate in homework intervention programmes designed by educators.

Parents are often eager to support their children's learning but do not always know how to help or why their involvement is important. Deliberative democratic school governance strategies will be useful in helping parents achieve this goal. Parents should be encouraged to ask questions if learner-educator communications do not offer sufficient guidance. This is most helpful if parents have opportunities to review the ideas with the educator. Objectives may include such goals as practising skills, developing independence and responsibility, developing higher level thinking skills, organising material, or simply getting learners to read more. More positive attitudes about school will be developed in the process, more especially if teaching and learning use deliberative democratic strategies.

6. 6.3 Implications of deliberative democratic school governance for teaching and learning

Here in South Africa there is much discussion about restoring a culture of teaching and learning in schools, and deliberative democratic school governance will help to bridge the gap between what learners can know and do, and what they need to know and do, by acknowledging the abilities of learners, and

seeking to strengthen and develop them. The barriers to education have to be confronted and broken down at many different levels, within the individual mind, and in the wider social context.

The key to good learning is good education or teaching which can equip learners with skills or tools to construct their own knowledge. In order for social and political change to occur, we all know that there needs to be skillful, organised action aimed at changing the structure of society through teaching and learning. By using DDSG the teaching process will aim to build learner confidence so that learners can trust themselves and in the process become independent and skilled learners. If educators, for example, are going to foster democratic skills and values by organising classrooms to provide a greater variety of teaching and learning methods, including more active and participatory ones, then they will have to be introduced to deliberative democratic school governance processes and skills.

Skills of negotiation, mediation, critical analysis, discussion and logic along with accompanying values of transparency, consultation and inclusion will be practised in the classroom. Paulo Freire (1972), a South American educationist whose ideas could play a major role here in South Africa, provides an example of how critical analysis skill can achieved this. Freire argues that education can contribute to and be part of the struggle to change society, and that social transformation will take place through critical practice of action and reflection.

To surmount the situation of oppression, men must first critically recognise the causes so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity (Freire 1972: 31-32). In other words a new and equal society, one which treats all people as fully human, can only be created if people understand why oppression occurs, and can then

deliberately attempt to change the root causes. This can be done only by means of praxis, reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.

According to Freire (1972), change takes place through acting and thinking about the action and its effects, so that further action can be more effective. Likewise, the learning process must be characterised by continual cycles of action and reflection, acting to learn and thinking about learning. By contrast with what Freire calls the banking concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to learners extends only as far as receiving, filling and storing the deposits, real learning and knowledge construction “emerges only through invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world and with each other” (Freire 1972: 58).

Learning, in the view of Freire, is much more than just collecting more and more facts. Good education must equip people to be creative and inventive, to search for knowledge, and to construct their own new understanding. He maintains that learning is, therefore, a dynamic process characterised by movement and change. This movement is not always a smooth transition from one state (not knowing) to another (knowing), rather the mind must make continual adjustments, re-evaluations and shifts, in order to grasp what is new and strange.

With the help of strategies from DDSG, learners’ voices, their inputs and concerns in relation to their classroom practices will be heard. In this sense, learners will not only experience such methods in their own learning on the subjects but will also experience democracy in the sense of having some say over what is taught and learnt as well. At the same time learners will be able to choose topics for group-work, individual projects, provide useful experience of the curriculum and learn decision-making skills they will need in their learning and adult life.

With the help of DDSG one of the skills that could help learners in the classroom is that of arguing (deliberation). In order to argue effectively, learners will be taught to produce valid evidence in support of their arguments, more especially when writing assignments. Evidence in the classroom is that information which can support one's claims, and show why one reached a particular conclusion. Evidence which learners will produce to support their argument in an answer may come from observing particular facts in the topic, or it may come from texts produced by experts in that particular field or study.

Learners in the classroom situation will learn deliberative skills in order to answer questions properly, and to argue effectively and in this way learn the methods of conducting research. Their task will be to search for information in the texts which will help them to argue their point effectively. This means that the evidence they give in support of their claims and conclusions will convince the educator, and more especially the reader, of what they have written. Moreover, they will need to be equipped with knowledge that, in the process of deliberation, there will usually be evidence which counts against their argument as well as that which supports it. A strong argument will take account of evidence both for and against a particular claim or conclusion. In the process they need to weigh up and evaluate all the evidence for and against, and in this way support the argument. This is a skill of deliberating logically.

During teaching and learning learners will be equipped with the force of reason and logic which will drive the construction of knowledge. This means that the development of knowledge must follow a logical movement from initial statements through to a conclusion. This conclusion must follow on from the initial facts or information in a way which is defensible or justifiable. In other words, the connections which tie the bits of information to each other and to the

conclusion must be evident to anyone who reads it and learners must learn to master this skill.

If learners are to acquire such skills they need opportunities within the community of the school. Learners will not by themselves suddenly gain the skills, tolerance and courtesy that is needed. A democratising classroom must be prepared and equipped to teach its pupils how to participate productively. If a democratic approach to schooling is to become the norm in the future, the development of the appropriate skills will need to be part of the school curriculum, indeed to be part of the very fabric of school life from the earliest years. Only thus will learners be able to develop the ability to handle empowerment and to participate actively and positively throughout their schooling to whatever degree is appropriate for their age level.

Furthermore, deliberative democracy encourages logical thinking. In the classroom learners will be taught skills of thinking and writing logically. The movement of thought from the initial statements to the conclusion must not be arbitrary or simply associative. Learners' everyday thinking is characterised by simply linking information loosely together, one thing makes us think of another in a quite haphazard and unpredictable way and each of us might individually follow quite different thought paths from the same starting point. Logic means that if we accept certain statements then they will necessarily lead us to conclude in a particular way. Deliberative democratic strategies will not end with teaching and learning but will continue into communities as well. In short, the project of creating self-reflective, constantly improving schools will never take place if the school community tries to do so in isolation.

When schools work together with families to support learning, children are inclined to succeed not just in school, but throughout life. Such participation of parents and families is critical not only in the very beginning of the educational

process, but throughout a child's entire academic career. Connections to this broader community are necessary not only because of the need to concrete knowledge, but also to garner necessary support that will be required to change schools and to keep them improving. The need is for leadership that matches the degree of self-management and participation with the existing commitment and competence of stakeholders.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter provides a synopsis of the whole study the whole study that describe the process aimed at engaging and offering possibilities drawn out of conclusions and findings, in terms of affirming and defining possibilities for integrating the Africanisation concept with democratic participation theory, which I believe could clarify its role in democratic governance. I argue that the African principles embody a system of discourses which describe Africa's earlier forms of societal organisations. In this sense it is a monument to our past and a true icon of our identity as Africans. The call for infusion of African deliberative democratic principles for better and comprehensive school governance, therefore, is a call for the coming of age of Africa's pedagogy and not for a perfect solution for South African school governance. After all it is hard to conceptualise African culture without reference to its culture, values and beliefs in our communities.

However, at the core of this chapter is the cultivation of good governance, management and a learning environment that can enable all stakeholders to learn about their responsibilities in bringing back the culture of teaching and learning through proper governance of their schools. The introduction of DDSG as a strategy could, it is hoped, encourage relationships among stakeholders, encourage cooperation and consultation and allow learners to voice their views freely on both academic and social issues affecting their lives.

The chapter also shows confidence that educators have an obvious capacity to effect change in all aspects of governance, management and pedagogy in schools. However, they need to resist the temptation of reverting to authoritarian teaching and the tug of despair that produces animosity. Conflict resolution through the provision of skills will enable stakeholders to interact in a manner which fosters tolerance and trust, which will contribute to an enabling school environment. In deploying DDSG techniques into community-related discourse practices capable of reanimating our public culture, morals, and values, we bridge the gap between school practices and societal change and transformation.

It is a fact that the greatest challenge facing educational transformation in South Africa today is lack of discipline and crime in schools and their surrounding communities. The development of DDSG as a new alternative will prompt the formation of new social movements, as critical individuals will align themselves into advocacy communities to respond to the varying levels and interconnectedness of discipline, violence and conflict.

Communities will have to take into consideration the voices of all their members, provide contexts in which people can speak and listen, learn and grow, and let go of ideas in order to move on to better ideas and collaborate in the fighting of crime for the achievement of social justice, which will be focus of the closing chapter. Communities have a tendency to look cynically at the symptoms of violence and crime, especially in schools, rather than addressing its roots. DDSG will provide some strategies on how to address crime in our communities, empowering school communities around core values, guided by a sense of hope and belief in justice and democracy.

CHAPTER 7

DELIBERATIVE DEMOCRATIC SCHOOL GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIC JUSTICE

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this closing chapter is to apply deliberative democratic school governance to societal issues such as violence and ill discipline in schools. The schooling/educational system nowadays reflects the social ills, social and cultural traditions, together with social and economic dynamics of our society. In this section I seek to answer the following questions: How could features of deliberative democratic school governance address issues of violence in society and ill discipline in schools? What can deliberative democratic school governance do for the South African society? Here, I suggest that deliberative democratic school governance is the way to go and should be practised in schools for the creation of democratic justice, particularly in our black societies.

In a nutshell, this chapter shows how we can have democratic justice in education and in society as a whole. I argue that the attainment of democratic justice will be of major importance to our schools because it is an aspiration that includes the idea that we can improve our understanding and our practice of human rights over time. For example, an ideal theory of justice says that when people associate for political purposes they should do so on the basis of a general moral commitment to justice, regardless of their group identity.

In support of justice theory, African theorists such as Ian Shapiro (1995) assert that justice must be pursued by democratic means if it is to garner legitimacy in the modern world, and democracy must be justice-promoting if it is to sustain

allegiance over time. If this idea could be achieved in schools, one would proudly say that democratic participation has been achieved in schools. However, at this moment, I must first look at issues of violence and crime in schools and in our society before applying deliberative democratic school governance principles as a solution to these societal ills.

7.2 Discipline, violence and crime in schools and society

In many cases, ill discipline, violence and crime in schools and in society just seem to be facts of life. One needs only to observe the unethical behaviour of children and adults in our societies to see that something is wrong. It seems that there is now a lack of basic moral values which were prevalent in communities only a few decades ago. Children show very little respect for parents, educators, elders, and friends. Many of them fail to meet commitments in school work; they do not keep promises; are not punctual and fail to do their homework. Furthermore, they use foul language in public, they litter, they push ahead in queues, they steal, they vandalise school property, they hold school authorities hostage, they deal in and take drugs, they rape and even murder (City Press October 2007: 2).

Statistics of these cases of violence and crime in schools are repeatedly reported. *City Press* has recently released a three year statistic (2004, 2005, and 2006) of cases of violence and crime committed by African learners in schools. In the newspaper, African school children are labelled as a menace in schools. Notably, the statistics excluded Indians and coloureds in the definition of "Africans".

Today we are moving into another directed society in which sensitive attention to the expectation of contemporaries is the only guidance which the individual can rely on. In this situation, inevitably, there is bound to be considerable confusion. Under these circumstances learners have difficulty in knowing who is right and who is wrong about anything these days. Too often the standards and values

exhibited at school and in communities are flagrantly opposed in the home and in society at large and nowhere more obviously than in the world of mass media, television, films, the press, and advertising. It seems that instead of working together, the formal and informal agencies, which should have an influence on moral education in our society, are pulling in opposite directions. Some way of producing order out of the existing chaos must be found, otherwise the moral upbringing of school learners will continue to degrade.

As educators, we have all seen situations where different stakeholders with different goals and needs have come into conflict because of the acts of violence such as those mentioned above. Furthermore, we have all seen the often intense personal animosity that can result because of ill discipline. The fact that such acts exist is a bad thing indeed, and if these acts are not handled effectively, the results can be damaging and goals will quickly turn into personal dislikes. Moreover, if something is not done to improve the moral behaviour of the children and adults in our societies and in schools, the problem will be far greater in a few years when the school learners of today are the adults of tomorrow. The problem exists and then, the question is: How can this problem be reduced, or hopefully, even be eliminated?

To my mind, deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) strategies can resolve ill discipline successfully and solve many of the problems that violence and crime have brought to the surface, as well as providing benefits that schools might not expect. As long as these problems are resolved effectively, they can lead to personal and professional growth. By following DDSG strategies, schools can often keep contentious discussions positive and constructive. These strategies could help to prevent the antagonism and dislike which so often causes conflict to spin out of control. This could be achieved if we as educators could start teaching deliberative democratic school governance skills in schools and communities as soon as possible.

Out of the many strategies of deliberative democratic school governance already suggested in previous chapters, only one for dealing with ill discipline, violence and crime in schools will be addressed in this section. Most of the strategies already mentioned can be applied; although they may vary in their degree of cooperativeness and assertiveness. Once our schools understand the different strategies they can use, they can think about the most appropriate approach or mixture of approaches for the situation they are in. Moreover, they can think about their own instinctive approaches, and learn how they need to change these strategies if necessary. Ideally schools and communities can adopt an approach that meets the situation, resolves the problem at hand, respects people's legitimate interests, and mends damaged stakeholder relationships.

In a nutshell, deliberative democratic school governance can create conditions to avoid violence in schools by establishing codes of ethics in schools and in the society at large through a deliberative democratic school governance approach. DDSG ethical resolution strategy will expand stakeholder awareness of the situation, giving stakeholders an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of other people.

7.3 Deliberative democratic school governance: Moral ethics strategy

Deliberative democratic school governance will help in establishing codes of professional ethics in both schools and communities. What I am implying here is that a DDSG code of ethics will be taught, and in that process, school learners will receive the correct moral education which will spill over to the communities. I believe that the truly ethical person acts as an autonomous agent, acts within the support and constraints of relationships, and acts in ways that transcend immediate self-interest. In other words, the ethical person will develop relatively

mature qualities of autonomy and collaboration. After examining these two foundational qualities of an ethical person – autonomy and collaboration – I draw some general conclusions that violence and crime will be combated in schools and in the surrounding communities. The question is: What is the rationale for the establishment of moral ethics?

Firstly, ethical persons are autonomous, that is, they are independent agents who act out of intuition about what is right or appropriate in a given situation. Their autonomy is in contrast to those who act out of mindless routine, or simply because others tell them to act in that way, or who act out of a feeling of obligation to or fear of those in authority. Autonomy implies a sense of personal choice, of taking personal responsibility for one's actions, and of claiming ownership of one's action.

However, the ethical person can be autonomous only if one's autonomy can bring one's unique personal self to an ethical exchange. Only autonomous persons add a piece of themselves to the ethical act. This we can see as one of the primary tasks facing a young person on his/her way to becoming autonomous. It follows that the formation of autonomous persons is a primary ethical task of schooling. For learners to learn to be autonomous, among parents, they must be recognised as special, and schools should take care to nurture their continued involvement in any matter pertaining to their involvement in school affairs.

Secondly, assumed in the notion of autonomy is the sense that the autonomous person is an individual. Here, an individual is regarded as a person who stands out from the crowd. This does not mean that such a person will be at liberty to follow all that the crowd stands for, or disagree entirely with what the community is putting forward. Rather, it means a willingness to oppose the

crowd in certain circumstances. For example, the person will have the liberty to take a different view if it seems appropriate.

Furthermore, one becomes an individual by interpreting the community's meanings in a personal and unique way. Staying with what the community offers, one has security and approval, whereas striking out into the unknown puts one at risk. To assume responsibility for one's life, to assert one's autonomy, creates a certain anxiety and one needs strength to stand up to such anxiety. Along similar lines Dewey (1927: 143) speaks of society working towards an ideal (democracy) in which human beings, working together, each with a reservoir of talent and intelligence, continuously recreate their society in progressive transformations, and in the process find their own individual fulfilment.

Thirdly, the ethical person works in collaboration with other people. As alluded to above, the autonomous person cannot express his/her autonomy except in relationships. Every relationship is distinct, and offers numerous possibilities because of the different qualities each person brings to the relationship. Co-operation between stakeholders will be essential to the development of the school as an ethical learning environment. The major goal here is to create within the school a climate of tolerance and respect which encourages the development of democratic culture grounded in ethical behaviour. In this sense, the community is regarded as an ingredient that may contribute to the improvement and establishment of ethical schools.

The quality of collaboration also has important political implications. For instance, in a democratic South Africa all rational persons realise that there is a fragile collage of many voices and many distinct communities. One view of democracy sees humans as inherently social, whose individual moral good is achieved and sustained only in community, through the bonds of blood, neighbourliness,

interdependence, and brotherly and sisterly affection. In this view, a person's humanity reaches its highest moral fulfilment in community.

Fourthly, ethical persons experience connectedness to their culture and to other persons. They should know that their cultures sustain their lives, and that they have a responsibility to sustain these cultures i.e. it involves a kind of loyalty to their cultures. So, ethical persons approach each other as cultural beings, yet they also approach each other as unique human beings. This adds, of course, to the paradox of autonomy. One is autonomous, yet one's autonomy is as a cultural being. Hence, ethical behaviour, while involving interpersonal relationships, is shaped by the circumstances and status of the persons involved.

Fifthly, ethical people are accommodative. These kinds of people are always willing to meet the needs of others at the expense of the person's needs. The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted. This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative. Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party, when peace is more valuable than winning.

Sixthly, acting ethically requires one to be sensitive to societal differences. This also requires a knowledge of and respect for different people involved. Furthermore, acting ethically means being sensitively connected to the values expressed by the various cultures. So it is not simply a question of one person in relation to another person: the relationship is supported as well as limited by cultures and religions in which the parties live their lives. Instead of only being concerned for one's own survival one becomes concerned with serving a larger common good. These ethical standards invest the individual with higher values and a sense of higher moral quality.

Finally, the achievement of ethical standards could result in harmony and democratic justice. A society which is just demands securing the basic interests of all individuals, which include adequate education, and a democratic say for all communities. The questions are: What is democratic justice? and What does it mean to establish democratic justice opportunities for schools?

7.4 Democratic justice

Democratic justice entails treating all individuals as civic equals with equal liberty and opportunity. Guttmann (2003: 24) asserts that the principles involved i.e. civic equality, equal freedom and basic opportunity are defended by a wide range of democratic theories. She warns people that the interpretation of these principles varies across democratic views, but the variation does not detract from the fact that civic equality, liberty, and opportunity are core principles of any morally defensible democracy. Furthermore, she maintains that, we can do justice to groups by distinguishing among the good the bad and the ugly, while recognising that such principles cannot be counted upon for others to do likewise.

Guttmann (2003) further maintains that democratic justice does not view individuals as atomistic individualists, however it views them as ethical agents. Ethical agency includes two capacities; the capacity to live one's life as one sees fit, consistent with respecting equal freedom of others, and the capacity to contribute to the justice of one's society and one's world. Such democratic justice principles are simply the concrete implications of the general requirement that one should foster the common good in one's community. However, the common good requires some degree of collaboration and co-ordination of conduct which I hope will be achieved in schools and in communities once democratic justice principles are adhered to by all stakeholders.

In other words, a just democracy helps secure for all persons the conditions of civic equality, equal freedom, and basic opportunity, principles that are preconditions of a fair democratic process but are also valuable in their own right as expressions of the freedom and equality of individual persons as ethical agents. The Republic of South Africa, where this study is based, is founded on values such as human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. This means that once democratic justice is achieved all rights in the Bill of Rights in schools will be needed to promote the Constitution's ambition of creating an open and democratic society based on human dignity and freedom. The question is: How can deliberative democratic school governance be used to achieve democratic justice in schools and communities?

7.5 Deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) and democratic justice

The three basic principles I am going to apply for the achievement of democratic justice in schools are those of civic equality, civic liberty and opportunity. This means that for deliberative democratic school governance to achieve democratic justice in schools, every stakeholder in school governance and in the school community at large will be expected to treat and see every other stakeholder as a person of equal worth. The end results of this endeavour will be that no person, whether as an educator, parent or learner, may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds. Learners will be expected to be treated in the same way as other stakeholders treat one another.

To elaborate further on the above idea, civic equality entails enjoying equal freedom of association. This is a moral commitment which means that people who are similarly situated in relevant ways should be treated similarly. Learners, in this case, are required by school governance policy to democratically

participate in school governance affairs and because of that they should be treated like other stakeholders. This implies that since being a civic equal entails enjoying equal freedom of association, people who are excluded from voluntary associations out of prejudice are treated as less than the civic equals of their fellow citizens. This should not be allowed to continue, more especially in public and government structures such as schools.

Furthermore, the equality principle allows for full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms. My understanding of this argument is that democratic participation demands that things which are the same in relevant important respects ought to be treated equally, that is, in relation to those aspects in which they ought to be treated in the same way. As a result of this, the same should also apply to learners. They need to be treated equally by other members of school governance. If this principle is not achieved or adhered to, democratic participation can never be achieved in schools, and this should be avoided at all cost.

Moreover, for it (democratic participation) to take place in schools and in school communities around schools, conditions for full and free development of all members of school governance should be promoted and this must be done for all members. This principle has played a central role in securing democracy in this country. Here in South Africa, to this end, special measures are taken to ensure the protection or advancement of people who have been disadvantaged by discrimination in the past. This means that the law must treat individuals in the same manner regardless of their circumstances. Stakeholders such as learners will need to enjoy all the basic principles of democracy, including civic equality because a just democracy treats individuals as civic equals and accords them equal freedom as persons. The assumption or contention here is that equality is implied by the notion of a decision by the people who are enjoying equal liberty.

A second principle is equal freedom. According to Guttmann (2003:25) a democratic state that respects individuals as free and equal persons does its best to secure civic equality for every person. Here in South Africa for example, the right to freedom of the person played a prominent role in the opening chapters of the constitution. However, this does not apply in this country only, even in other democratic states, the freedom of association makes representative politics possible. The central point is that people are free or could be free to make decisions only where there is freedom to present different viewpoints, and where the people are free to make whatever decision they wish to make without being hindered or prevented while trying to do so. This democratic discourse considers the importance of liberty as the individual freedom of action within diverse social spaces to promote transformation and change.

Bowles and Gintis (1987: 4), believe that "liberty entails freedom of thought and association, freedom of political, cultural and religious expression, and the right to control one's body and express one's preferred spiritual, aesthetic, and sexual style of life". This view when relating it to Guttmann's argument could be translated as meaning that a just democracy respects the ethical agency of individuals, and since individuals are the ultimate source of ethical value, respect for their ethical agency is a basic good. The same could be easily applied in schools, by respecting learners' freedom as individuals and as people.

The positive freedom to associate consists of two components. The first guarantees the individual's freedom to establish, to join or take part in the activities of the association. However, the freedom to join or take part should not be confused with the entitlement to become a member or to take part in the activities of a particular association. Secondly, the democratic citizen has the right to participate in political activity, be protected by the law, have access to education and be treated with human dignity. If these principles could be

adopted by all stakeholders, justice will prevail and if there is no justice in the structure of school governance there will be no harmony, not only in school governance but in the school at large.

For democratic participation to succeed in schools and in societies at large, the word 'freedom' of individuals should be translated to mean self-determination, for it is the free individual who determines his or her own actions. This could mean that if each and every group of stakeholders including learner's voices could be heard, and where learners could view themselves as having important contributions, and where they could be allowed to be free in whatever decision or contribution they wish to make, democratic participation will become a reality.

A third and last principle is that of basic opportunity. Basic opportunity is the capacity of individuals to live a decent life with a fair chance to choose among their preferred ways of life. Basic opportunities are broadly agreed upon to include adequate schooling, substance and non-discrimination in the distribution of educational and career opportunities. Unfair discrimination against persons on grounds of personal attributes denies recognition of the very attribute that is common and equal to all, namely human dignity.

For democratic participation to be a reality, school governance stakeholders should be encouraged to be active and civic-minded so as to participate in almost all ventures without any forms of coercion. This means that for democratic participation to be seen as relevant, individuals such as learners should be free to pursue their own interests and hold their own opinions in matters pertaining to them. When this notion is achieved, democratic justice will become a reality in school governance. It is believed that a society is just if it acts in accordance with the shared understandings of its members, as embodied in its characteristic practices and institutions.

Civic opportunity is simply an opportunity for the people to voice their opinion. Once people begin to participate, they obtain skills to engage civically, they get satisfaction from doing so, their identity begins to shift, and they begin to see themselves as citizens or participants, not as isolated individuals. Most people, when they have reached these levels of civic equality, liberty and opportunity will participate effectively if they are given the opportunity to do so. Individuals who are asked to participate in political activities are more likely to do so. Participation does change values and habits and the most important thing, though, is that each person enjoys equal status despite unequal positions.

The consequence of failing to have civic participation is far reaching as the very concept of democracy is premised on having an inclusive process of deliberation and widespread engagement in civic processes. The strength of the nation's civic society, and the ability to protect one's interests, derive in large part from the degree to which we realise these ideas and the degree of community resilience is linked to the level of civic engagement. The questions therefore are: Why is it important for young people such as learners to have civic opportunities? Why does civic participation matter to them? These questions could be best answered by applying democratic justice to schools and communities.

7.6 Democratic justice for South African schools and communities

First, democratic justice will enable freedom of association for all individuals. It will discourage those groups that threaten to harm other people by ensuring that free association does not become a licence to harm or discriminate against others. Identity groups can be prevented from excluding disfavoured people from public accommodations or otherwise denying them equal educational or economic opportunity. This will be based on an ideal theory of African justice which purports that when people associate for socio-economic and political

purposes, they do so on the basis of a general moral commitment to justice, regardless of their group identity.

Second, educating for democratic justice means that our actions as well as our words seek full participation for all people. By means of deliberative democratic justice, the schools will have a structured opportunity to reflect on current practices, on notions of compliance, on justice, on democratic approaches to problem solving, and on what is important to them in their relationship with each other. In this sense, schools will be seen as developing individual potentialities consistent with social values, stressing the gerundial form rather than the finite suggestion of development.

Third, equality will be another social principle that will be central in the current debate in education. The equality principle argues for the compensation of unequal sociocultural conditions and even reverse discrimination. It allows for full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms and also entails enjoying equal freedom of association. Embedded inequalities should be avoided at all cost as they produce unequal opportunities for civic participation. We need to understand the consequences of these embedded inequalities, how disparities are produced, and how they can be eliminated in order to ensure that all individuals have the same opportunity to be civic equal participants. If this could happen in schools a qualitative relationship could be entrenched.

Fourth, deliberative democratic justice means that the harm done to people and relationships needs to be explored and that harm needs to be repaired. Democratic justice will provide an opportunity for schools to practise participatory, deliberative democracy in their attempts to solve problems around those serious incidents of misconduct that they find so challenging. It will also provide an opportunity to explore how the life chances of learners, either as perpetrators of violence or victims together with their families might be

improved, and how the system might be transformed in ways likely to minimise the chances of further harm.

Fifth, by practising a deliberative democratic justice approach to problem-solving, schools will also be made accountable for those aspects of structure, policy, organisation, curriculum and pedagogy which have contributed to minimal democratic participation of its learners. When deliberative democratic justice strategies are in place, the responsibility for managing learners' behaviour will not be the sole provenance of classroom educators or school leadership and management. It will be crucial that all adult members of the school community, including school management teams and parent bodies, are introduced to the philosophy and practice of deliberative democratic justice with its emphasis on building a sense of community through enhancing and restoring relationships.

Sixth, when deliberative democratic justice is in place, educators will have opportunities to broaden their discourse around the nature of disruption and conflict in the school, to be able to take into account those factors which impact on a young person's life and life chances. It is essential that this discourse places issues of behaviour management in an educational context rather than conflict.

In terms of the value and principle of tolerance, individuals are seen to be equal but different. These differences – cultural, religious, ethnic or other – should not make us unequal. In a democracy, such differences are respected and tolerated. Those in positions of trust are expected to respect the differences of others, especially minority groups. This promotion of equality and prevention of unfair discrimination imposes positive obligations on both the school and community members to promote equality.

Seventh, deliberative democratic justice will form a sound basis for a critical review of policy and practice in the school including classroom management and

the whole school package, and offer staff insights into their own behaviour. It has already been mentioned in previous chapters that modelling of appropriate wholesome behaviours, and relationship-centred approaches to problem-solving which are not grounded in punishment, are important factors in delivering improved outcomes for learners and this would need critical thinkers.

Furthermore, critical thinking can be defined as the ability to use high level thinking. It is used to critique ideas and is associated with rationality, reasonableness, reflective thinking and the scientific inquiry process. As such, the ability to think critically protects citizens against indoctrination and misinformation. It also empowers people to select views they are comfortable defending rationally, therefore people who employ the skill of critical thinking will be inquisitive and will continuously examine alternatives in the process of forming conclusions.

Eighth, both in-service and pre-service educators need to experience the same opportunities for discourse around notions of compliance, justice and democracy as it applies in the school. They will need, at the very beginning of their professional lives, to develop an understanding of how important relationships are to pedagogy, and to look for mentors among educators in schools who can model appropriate behaviours and guide them supportively. They will also need to be exposed to democratic practices, and to have the acquisition of these skills built into their courses.

Ninth, healthy relationships must be considered as a high priority in the achievement of the educational goals of the school. This approach will place an emphasis firmly within the school itself rather than within the learner body. In this way, the school curriculum will need to focus on the range of factors which influence learner outcomes, so that they may develop a broader view of behaviour management.

Tenth, the first priority of discipline policy making at school level should be to focus on the overall goal of providing successful learning programs for all learners, and must take into account the articulation between lower primary and secondary schooling. Governance policies where learners participate will need to be inclusive. Advantages could be derived from a consideration of issues across learner-educator relationships, school governance and decision-making, curriculum matters, pedagogy and school leadership and management.

Finally, my hope is that, over time, a critical mass of knowledge and skills firmly grounded in an understanding of what is required to develop healthy relationships and healthy communities will eventually produce the kinds of deliberative democratic school governance outcomes that will improve the life chances of our young people. Democratic justice will then aim towards a basic pattern of balance and harmony within these groups and within society. I now move on to deliberative democratic school governance and democratic justice as a strategy to combat violence and crime in schools.

7.7 Deliberative democratic school governance and democratic justice as a response to violence in schools

Deliberative democracy consists of three principles that regulate the process of politics namely, reciprocity, publicity and accountability. In their 1996 book, *Democracy and Disagreement*, Guttman and her co-writer Dennis Thompson made mention of these three aforementioned principles for a vibrant deliberative democracy. The process of reciprocity allows citizens to offer reasons that similarly motivated citizens can accept even though they recognise that they share only some of one another's values that apply to empirical claims as well as in moral arguments. In the instances of publicity for example, moral conflicts typically take place in public forums and accountability extends not only to elected officials, but also to less conspicuous officials, interest group leaders,

employees and ordinary citizens when they act in a public capacity. However, it is worth mentioning that in this section I will only focus on reciprocity and publicity because accountability has been dealt with in greater detail in the preceding sections of this chapter.

As strategies to be used to combat violence and crime, DDSG and democratic justice will be essential to our morally robust democratic life. Applying a democratic principle such as reciprocity to our schools and school governance structure for example, will mean that deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) and democratic justice could create a conducive atmosphere that will somehow be able to reduce violence and crime if such principles could be adopted by school stakeholders.

The principle of reciprocity could also be used as a strategy to solve violence and crime because reciprocity governs how we should speak, but not what we should say, in ways that give value to inculcate in the participants the characteristics of open mindedness. For example, when citizens reason reciprocally, they seek fair terms of social cooperation for their own sake and they try to find mutually acceptable ways of resolving moral disagreements amicably. When a disagreement is not deliberative, citizens do not have any obligations of mutual respect toward their opponents. In some cases citizens try to accommodate the moral convictions of their opponents to the greatest extent possible, without compromising their own moral convictions.

Furthermore, citizens who reason reciprocally can recognise that a position is worthy of moral respect even when they think it morally wrong. In a school situation for example, stakeholders can believe that a position on corporal punishment is morally respectable even though they think it morally mistaken. In this case the presence of deliberative disagreement has important implications for how stakeholders treat one another and for what policies they should adopt.

In deliberative disagreement (for example, about corporal punishment), stakeholders might try to accommodate the moral convictions of their opponents to the greatest extent possible, without compromising their own moral convictions. Guttmann (2003) calls this kind of accommodation an economy of moral disagreement, as she believes that though neglected in theory and practice, it is essential to a morally robust democratic life.

Another principle of democratic justice that could be adopted by schools and school governance in their endeavour to fight violence and crime is that of publicity. Even today, it is still believed that the guiding conception of publicity in deliberative democracy remains basically Kantian. For him, publicity is expressed in the verdict of free and equal citizens, who put everything to the test of free and open examination. Based on this version of publicity, citizenship requires adopting a particular role and point of view, which abstracts from all contingent features of oneself, such as social and institutional roles.

The publicity principle involves the public context of political debate and decision-making. It is often referred to as transparency in the broader civic and social arenas and cannot be built on a culture of secrecy. In order to avoid a culture of secrecy in schools and in communities at large, publicity will be required to involve either the expectation or assumption of account-giving behavior. The account-giving behaviour implies openness, communication, and accountability and all these aspects cannot be kept as a secret in any given situation.

Guttmann (2003) maintains that the norm of publicity has long been a primary means for political problem-solving in modern societies. However, she has argued that the problems to be solved are different from the abstract inclusive civic public spheres than they are for cosmopolitan public spheres. With the emergence of a society differentiated around state and civic institutions, she asserts that the public sphere offers an attractive ideal of a unity of opinions in a

sphere of political discussion free from the growing power of the state. Because of this view, she believes that inclusion should offer much the same ideal centered approach around diverse citizenry by unifying them in a common public sphere.

Participation in the public sphere means that one must be responsive to others besides speaking to an indefinite audience. A public sphere requires not only a social space for communication to an indefinite audience but also that diverse members of a society interact in distinctive ways and thereby come to regard themselves as a public which is concerned with each other's opinions and endorses some explicit norms of publicity.

In a public sphere one is required to be accountable to other people's objections and to be answerable to their demands in order to recognise their concerns. This idea is based on the fact that publicity strategy cannot exist as a purely one way communication. People who are interested in a certain issue could try to influence the decisions. This principle is based on the fact that the reasons given by citizens and officials should be made public to ensure that they are reciprocal and realise the independent moral value of openness.

Theorists such as Habermas, for example, see the idea of publicity as a social space generated by communicative action. He maintains that higher levels of publicity require accountability to others. In a public sphere, he further asserts that communicative exchanges suspend the sharp distinction of audience and participants and allow exchange of speaker and hearer roles across all social positions and identities. If this could be achieved or adopted by schools, it could create a space for an equal everyday participation of all stakeholders.

The recognition of equal standing of citizens in a community is one form that publicity has taken and this could be strengthened in schools as a strategy in

dealing with violence and crime. Public space requires that participants become conscious of themselves as a public equal who develops and extends existing forms of publicity. During the publicity process freedom of information could be used as a tool to fight violence and crime. The public's self-identification as a public concerned with free and open communication pushes the public sphere toward inclusive forms of publicity. The wider and more inclusive the public sphere becomes, the more asymmetric the conditions of the social distribution of knowledge become, especially if the opinions under scrutiny are ones based on empirical knowledge. If learners in a school situation are to participate in the larger public sphere with their social roles intact, it will be wise if some of their opinions could be owned by the communities including various stakeholders.

In summary, for democratic justice to be effective in its fight against crime and violence in schools, policy making at school level needs to be participatory and democratic, with emphasis on the inclusion of those who must implement the policy. Learners will need to be equipped to analyse the school agendas underlying the development of school policy and how it impacts on all the various school stakeholders and the community at large. Attention should be paid to the processes of policy development on violence and crime in the school community. Dialogue and debate by all stakeholders, especially learners, in the translation of school policy at the school site will need to include issues of school philosophy, implementation and evaluation of programmes, and have a focus beyond how to handle episodes of disruption and misconduct.

Furthermore, stories can also be shared about the creative ways schools are using the strategies to resolve both smaller and larger scale violence situations. In schools, for example, someone who is still young, who is full of health, energy and commitment, might assemble a collection of these deliberative democratic justice practices which can be published and distributed to both schools and

communities on a monthly basis. Nowadays, press media and community radios can help with creative stories on how to achieve democratic justice in schools.

Learners will also need the support of adults in order to develop their deliberative democratic skills. The challenge is in finding the balance and level of support because learner leadership is about courage, risk taking, perseverance, trust and enthusiasm within a culture of transparency and mutual understanding. In a democracy, we also have a responsibility to respect the dignity and worth of others, regardless of race, class, gender, religion, ability, or ethnic background.

Finally, deliberative democratic justice needs to be authentic. It will be authentic when schools prepare their learners to become critical thinkers capable of and responsible for creating change that values diversity through action in their own lives and in the broader society. Thus, active participation may lead toward equality for political and economically disempowered communities. Likewise, building a community of learners, utilising inclusive strategies among educators, learners, families, and diverse communities will enrich culture and language, create positive social change, and promote a sense of ownership which increases the possibilities for academic success of learners.

7.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, the deliberative democratic school governance (DDSG) philosophy underpinning this chapter offers schools and surrounding communities a new perspective on ways in which poor behaviour and crime issues could be addressed. It suggests that managed in the wrong way, real and legitimate differences between people can quickly spiral out of control, resulting in situations where cooperation breaks down and the school's mission and vision are threatened. This is particularly the case where the wrong approaches to ill discipline, violence and crime resolution are used.

Based on the unethical behaviour of a large percentage of school learners and communities surrounding schools, it is clear that something is wrong with regard to moral education in schools today. This chapter therefore views ill discipline as harmful to relationships and suggests that deliberative democratic moral ethics can be focused on the present (repairing the harm), and the future (transforming the system in some way to prevent further harm). To calm these situations down, it makes a positive approach to deliberative democratic ethic resolution strategies, where discussion is courteous and non-confrontational, and the focus is on issues rather than on individuals.

Moral ethics, in its fight against violence and crime, will provide a guide to educators, learners and parents towards an ethical living. Furthermore, by providing opportunities for learners to exercise autonomy, educators will enable them to experience the fulfilment and satisfaction of one way of being human. They will learn the lesson that living ethically is a major part of the fulfilment of human nature. If this could be done, then, as long as people listen carefully and explore facts, issues and possible solutions properly, violence can be resolved effectively in schools and in the surrounding communities by employing democratic justice principles.

Furthermore, it has been highlighted in this chapter that there is an identified need for democratic justice in schools and in societies at large. Democratic justice represents an opportunity to address the complex issues which influence learner outcomes and insists that schools become accountable for creating an authentic supportive school environment. It focuses our attention on relationships between all members of the school community and educates us about the value of relationships in achieving quality outcomes for learners. Deliberative democratic justice processes will inform professional development efforts aimed at building healthy relationships.

Finally, three basic conditions of democratic justice such as, civic equality, freedom and association have been suggested as strategies that could help in the fight against violence and crime. Equal freedom of association for example has been seen to be necessary for equal citizenship. Here, it has been suggested that the right to freedom of expression embraces the right to receive, hold and consume expressions transmitted by others. In this view the right to freedom of expression will protect both speakers and recipients. With freedom of association, individuals will join others to express social parts of their identities, to pursue instrumental aims, and to offer mutual support, which can aid or impede the legitimate aims of those discriminated against.

Moreover, as a strategy in the fight against crime, the conditions of democratic justice which include the principles of reciprocity and publicity have been suggested and debated. It is argued that the value that citizens and officials give to publicity should be public, partly to ensure that they are reciprocal but also to realise the independent moral value of openness. These principles in turn will underpin issues of pedagogy, curriculum and school organisation and all critical components determining school culture.

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Appendices

Appendix A



EASTERN CAPE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Manual for School Management

July 2001

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SECTION L

LEARNERS

CHAPTER 1: THE REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS (RCL)

INTRODUCTION

Many schools have a tradition of Student Representative Councils (SRCs), which played a major role in the birth of the new South Africa. Other schools have a long school prefect tradition. Then there are schools that use both systems. All these traditions needed to be brought together within the new context to consolidate democracy at school level. The best elements of these traditions had to be considered in order to see what was appropriate. This resulted in the South African Schools Act stipulating that RCLs must be established in schools with learners in grade eight and higher.

The MEC may exempt a public school for learners with special education needs (LSEN) from having an RCL if it is not practical to have such a council at that school. A letter of motivation should be forwarded to the District Office to obtain written permission to do so from the MEC.

1. WHAT IS A REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL OF LEARNERS (RCL)

An RCL is an official body constituted in accordance with the SA Schools Act representing all learners in secondary schools. The RCL should become the most prestigious official representative structure of learners in the entire school. An RCL is made up of learners elected by their fellow learners to represent them and is the only body that represents every learner and in which every learner can participate.

2. THE PURPOSE OF THE RCL

The council is to provide learners with an opportunity to participate in school governance and to participate in appropriate decision-making. An RCL also has to enable learners to contribute towards the improvement of the culture of learning, teaching and service in their school.

WHAT AN RCL MUST KNOW

- An RCL should know that the main purpose of being at school is to learn.
- An RCL must understand that the principal cannot morally or legally hand over the management of the school to anyone. S/he cannot give his or her powers to learners.
- An RCL must know and understand its rights and responsibilities (obligations).
- An RCL must support or contribute to the sound management of the school authorities.
- An RCL must contribute to the smooth running of the school and support the governance of the school.
- An RCL must understand that each school is unique just as families are. As a result no two schools can ever be identical in their management and governance.

- An RCL needs to know that it should be a non-aligned organisation.
- An RCL must remember that the relationship between educators and their employers (the provincial Departments of Education) is governed by Labour Law and that they have no direct influence on labour processes and matters. Members of the RCL do not have the authority or right to punish other learners and should report instances of misconduct to educators.

4. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF AN RCL

- The main objective of establishing an RCL is to create a sense of co responsibility in learners.
- It is an attempt to create the opportunity to identify and develop future leaders.
- It is also an attempt to create a sound and healthy relationship between learners, educators and non-educators, as well as parents.
- It fosters sound interaction among learners and educators.
- It aims to keep learners abreast of events at school and in the community.
- It aims to promote sport and cultural activities within the school community.
- *It represents learners in the SGB.*
- *It provides a voice for learner expression.*
- *In appropriate situations, an RCL provides learners with an opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding the school.*

5. ELECTIONS OF AN RCL

At the end of each year the learners of the school should democratically elect an RCL for the following year.

5.1 TEACHER LIAISON OFFICER

The teacher liaison officer must be an educator at the school concerned. S/he must be a reliable and sympathetic educator and build a trusting relationship with the RCL and school management in order to promote communication between him or herself, the principal, staff and the RCL. The main function of the educator should be to guide and organise the RCL and develop a sense of leadership in the members of the RCL.

5.2 OFFICE-BEARERS

The teacher liaison officer must convene the first RCL meeting. The members of the council must elect at least the following office-bearers:

- A chairperson
- A deputy chairperson
- A secretary
- A treasurer

An office-bearer must remain in office for a term not exceeding 12 months from the date of his or her election. The chairpersons of sub-committees must also be elected during the first meeting. The RCL will also have an RCL Executive consisting of four or five members, usually the main office-bearers.

6. THE FUNCTIONING OF AN RCL

A good RCL must be a sound, functioning body, which respects educators, learners, parents, the SGB and non-educators. An RCL must serve the school willingly and must be able to encourage the voluntary co-operation of learners.

6.1 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RCL

The following are the responsibilities of an RCL:

- It must liaise and communicate with the learners, professional school management team (SMT) and the SGB at the school.
- Because it represents the learners, it must accept that the well being of the school and learners is its primary task.
- It must foster a spirit of mutual respect, good manners and morality among the learners.
- It must promote and maintain discipline among learners and promote the general welfare of the school.
- It must foster participation in school activities.
- It must provide a training ground for developing leaders.
- It must help each learner to feel at home in the school.
- It must lead learners to develop high ideals of personal conduct.
- It must promote orderliness and not disrupt the order in the school.
- It must assist school management in implementing the school policy.
- It must attempt to democratise its activities at the school.

6.2 FUNCTIONS OF THE RCL

6.2.1 Liaison roles:

- An RCL acts as an important instrument for liaison and communication.
- When a learner experiences or identifies a problem s/he communicates it to the class representative who communicates it to the school's RCL directly. The class representative is a learner elected by a specific class to act as its mouthpiece and liaise with the RCL. This person represents the class. The RCL then tries to solve the problem in accordance with the powers vested in it through its constitution. If it cannot solve the problem, it will be referred to the teacher liaison officer who, if he or she cannot solve the problem, refers it to the principal, who must then make a decision. In extreme cases the principal might even refer the problem to other authorities, for example the SGB.
- When a learner communicates directly with the principal, he or she refers the problem to the RCL through the teacher liaison officer.
- Sometimes it may be appropriate for the RCL to liaise with the principal without including the teacher liaison officer, although the teacher liaison officer would normally be included.
- The most important communication is that between the RCL and the learners. A negative relationship between the RCL and learners can cause serious tension in the school situation.

6.2.2 RCL meetings

- An RCL meets at fairly regular intervals, as determined by its constitution, to consider ideas, suggestions, comments and even complaints from its constituencies. Ordinary meetings must be held at least quarterly. Special meetings can be called by the chairperson, Executive Committee, the teacher liaison officer, the principal, or at the written request of a particular number of members stipulated in the constitution.
- The purpose of the meeting, date, time and venue of the meeting should be stipulated in the notification. Members of the RCL must be in possession of the notice of a meeting at least seven days before the date of such a meeting. If 50% of the members of an RCL is present, there will be a quorum. The chairperson must convene an RCL meeting if the principal, Education Development Officer or District Director concerned requests him or her to do so.
- The secretary of the RCL should take minutes of everything discussed at the meetings and circulate it to the relevant persons reasonably soon after the date of the meeting. The minutes should be available to departmental officials on request.
- After every meeting an RCL gives feedback to the learners.
- If an idea is turned down, an RCL must try to explain why approval was not granted.
- If an idea is approved, it must be conveyed to the professional management and the SGB, where applicable.
- If they also approve the idea, it becomes part of the school policy, if applicable. If they do not approve the idea, the principal must explain the reasons for this decision to the council, who in turn must inform its constituency.

6.2.3 RCL Constitution

The ideas about the purpose of the school's RCL, its members, etc. that have been gathered from educators, parents, learners and other sources, must be put together into a constitution. A constitution is a basic document, which contains the legal rules and principles according to which an RCL should function.

A constitution generally

- states the name of the organisation
- outlines the general purpose of the organisation and
- lists the membership qualifications and election procedures.

6.2.3.1 Procedures for writing a constitution

The following steps can serve as guidelines to an RCL on how to write its constitution: The Executive Committee of an RCL and the teacher liaison officer form part of the committee that has to write the constitution of the RCL.

- After having written down a proposed constitution, the writing committee may provide copies of its proposal to a few learners, educators, the SGB and the other role-players to study and comment on.

- Any changes suggested may be voted on by the committee and if approved, included in a revised version of the first proposal.
- The constitution is then ready to be examined and approved by all the learners.
- RCL constitutions should be written in a language that can be understood by all the learners to whom it applies.

6.2.3.2 Contents of a constitution

Section 1: Name

This section states the name of the council, for example: *"The name of this council is....."*

Section 2: Purpose, duties and responsibilities

This section includes details about the general aims and objectives and the general areas of responsibility of the council.

Section 3: Membership

This section covers the criteria for membership, how and when a member may be removed from office and how vacancies may be filled.

Section 4: Office-bearers and representatives

This section names the office-bearers of the council, for example the chairperson, describes the nomination and election procedures, outlines the general duties and responsibilities of each office-bearer and lists standing committees and provisions for the appointment of any special committees.

Section 5: Meetings

This section states how often the meetings of the council will be held, determines the procedures for calling meetings and establishes a quorum required for conducting business. A quorum is the required number of members that has to be present at a meeting in order for decisions made to be legal.

Section 6: Election of members

This section outlines the entire procedure for the election process, gives guidance on the time for elections, who may vote and provides information on general procedures.

Section 7: Committees

This section lists the names of all standing or permanent committees, states how members must be appointed to such committees and what their terms of office, duties and responsibilities are.

Section 8: Legal authority

This section spells out what the functions of the council are in terms of the SA Schools Act.

Section 9: Adoption and amendment procedures

This section lists the detailed procedures to be followed to adopt and revise a constitution.

6.2.4 Finances

An RCL should negotiate with its SMT and SGB about funds that may possibly be available to it. Policy, rules, procedures and responsibilities regarding the finances of an RCL must be clarified and set out clearly. Strict records should be kept of how income has been generated and spent. The teacher liaison officer must bank the money on behalf of the RCL. Records must be kept of all such transactions.

6.2.5 Code of conduct

An RCL must encourage learners to be committed to their code of conduct, because it promotes exemplary conduct. It is advisable that an RCL draws up a special code of conduct for RCL members according to the school's code of conduct for learners. This code should include specific rules for acceptable behaviour by members as well as procedures on how unacceptable behaviour should be handled.

6.2.6 Representation on the SGB

It is compulsory for all public schools to have learners on their School Governing Bodies if they provide education for learners in the eighth grade and higher. This will provide the learners with a legitimate role to play in school governance and management. It is the duty of the RCL to elect the learners who must serve on the SGB. It is important to note that learners who are elected to the SGB need not necessarily be members of the RCL.

Appendix B

CHAPTER 1 GOVERNANCE AS PARTNERSHIP

INTRODUCTION

SECTION C SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

South African Schools Act 84 of 1996, Section 18.

Provincial Gazette No 250 (Vol. 4) of 21 July 1997 (Provincial Notice No. 18) Section 26.

Guide for School Governing Bodies, Department of Education, 1999 Page 25.

First Steps. School Governance Starter Pack.

A Resource for School Governing Body Members. Department of Education, 1997, Pages 27-31. School Governance. The Election of School Governing Bodies. Guide for Establishing School Governing Bodies, Department of Education, 1997, Pages 24-26.

INTRODUCTION

The SGB is the perfect example of the new understanding of governance, which is at the centre of the new education system. The SGB is made up of the most important school stakeholders: mainly parents, but also educators, non-teaching staff, learners (at the secondary level), and community members. The SGB is a community-level partnership and must take responsibility for ensuring that the children of that community get the kind of education that will make them citizens of which the new South Africa can be proud. The SGB plays an active role in framing the school's direction, vision and mission.

One of the most important responsibilities of leaders and managers in any organisation is what is known as *boundary management*. This means managing the boundary between the organisation and the rest of the community or world. In a school, the School Management Team (SMT) is not only responsible for dealing with the *internal stakeholders* (staff and learners), but also with the external stakeholders such as parents, the district and the Department, educator trade unions, service providers, and the wider community. The guiding principles for the SMT should be to promote understanding, clarity, mutual respect and a general sense of common purpose. An SMT needs to work on the basis that those they deal with have the education of the children of the community and society at heart. The SMT needs to be open to criticism and alternative points of view and express a sound understanding of important issues and areas of possible disagreement or conflict.

1. STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

The new policy framework is based on a belief that our schools, and therefore our country, can only prosper if they are guided by new forms of governance which emphasise the interrelatedness of different stakeholders in the education process. Governance in education is concerned with relationships between people: individuals, interest groups, direct stakeholders and institutions and structures in the education system. Governance should be seen as co-operation and partnership to bring about positive educational outcomes through collaborative leadership and management. Stakeholder relationships are therefore very important to the task of leading and managing in schools.

1.1 NEW FORMS OF RELATIONSHIPS

As leaders and managers the SMT should promote new forms of relationships by: Establishing the necessary structures. Structures should be identified and established and regular meetings should be held to ensure sound communication with and between stakeholders.

Sharing relevant information

Sharing information and working towards achieving a common understanding of information is a powerful way of building stakeholder commitment.

Allowing for participation and involvement. Establish a new approach to governance in education by consulting with all the relevant stakeholders before decision-making processes begin.

Sharing credit

Collaboration, shared authority and trust cannot exist where the leader or manager, or one group of people such as the SMT takes all the credit for work.

Recognising and rewarding honesty and openness

Leaders need to set the example of honesty and openness in all meetings and other interactions. It is the responsibility of the SMT to develop an environment where trust and openness are seen as the right way to work.

Promoting and rewarding partnering

The SMT should encourage relationships between internal stakeholders and between internal and external stakeholders. The ability to form such partnerships and to use them effectively in the interest of the school should be an explicit performance criterion for all educators.

Managing conflict

Conflict is natural and if well managed it can be healthy and important. The SMT should help stakeholders in conflict with one another to recognise that, even though they have different views and positions, they have a common interest, namely the education and welfare of the children.

1.2 ADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATORY MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

- People discover common needs and purposes. They see a connection between their own needs and the school's needs.
- People feel that they are doing something that matters to them personally and to the larger world.
- People welcome problems which are challenging and through which they will grow and learn.
- Teams of people have greater resources because each person brings something different to the team, but they all contribute to achieving the common goal.
- Working in this way brings out the creativity in individuals and in teams.
- The school can recognise and use all the knowledge of its staff, learners and other stakeholder groups.
- Visions of where the school should be going come from all levels. The responsibility of leaders is to manage the process so that new visions become shared visions.
- All staff and other stakeholders are invited to learn what is happening at every level of the school so that they can understand how their actions influence others. People feel free to ask about one another's assumptions and opinions and to question their own.
- People trust one another as colleagues. There is mutual respect and trust in the way that they talk to one another and work together, no matter what their position is.
- People see the rich resources of experience, skill and knowledge in others, which go together with their own.
- People feel free to experiment, take risks and openly evaluate the results, because mistakes are tolerated.
- People are encouraged to value helping one another, and asking for help is seen as a strength, not a weakness.
- People celebrate their achievements. They enjoy talking about the successes and failures they have shared and this helps to build a broader sense of ownership of the school and a shared concern for it.
- Building participatory relationships lays a solid foundation for building a school of which the school community, the Department and the wider community can be proud.

2. DIFFERENT GROUPS

2.1 THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Department works at different levels. The national and provincial levels create the policy, legal and regulatory framework within which each school functions. The district office should be a direct partner in supporting the school. The SMT under the leadership of the principal should ensure that the relationship with each of these levels is working effectively.

2.2 THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The School Governing Body (SGB) is the perfect example of the new understanding of governance, which is at the centre of the new education system. The SGB is made up of the most important school stakeholders: mainly parents, but also educators, non-teaching staff, learners (at the secondary level) and community members. The SGB is a community-level partnership and must take responsibility for ensuring that the children of that community get the kind of education that will make them citizens of which the new South Africa can be proud. The SGB plays an active role in framing the school's direction, vision and mission.

The SGB and the SMT should be partners in leading and managing the school. Their roles are different, but neither the SGB nor the SMT can perform their functions without the active support of the other.

2.3 EDUCATORS

After the SGB, the educators in the school are the most important partners in managing and leading the school through the challenges of change. Without effective co-operation between educators and the SMT, the vision and goals for the school will not be achieved.

2.4 LEARNERS

One of the aims of education in the new paradigm is to develop responsible future citizens. At the secondary level, the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) is seen as a full partner in the governance of the school.

2.5 LABOUR UNIONS

Labour unions are now a fact of life in education. Often school management feels very negative about labour unions, but, wherever possible, they should be seen as partners in giving our children a quality education. The SMT needs to establish a constructive relationship with the labour unions at the school.

CHAPTER 2 THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY (SGB)

INTRODUCTION

Sound school governance and community involvement ensure the prevalence of the culture of learning, teaching and service. The South African Schools Act makes a distinction between the governance functions of the SGB and the professional functions of educators. The SMT and SGB should negotiate their different areas of responsibility and work closely together in the best interest of the school. They need to ensure that the school is accessible to and addresses the needs of the community. This should encourage the community to take pride in the school and protect and support it in all its endeavours.

1. THE COMPOSITION OF THE SGB

1.1 WHO SERVES ON THE SGB?

The following are component members of the SGB:

- Elected members
- The school principal
- Co-opted members

Parents Educators Learners (Grade 8 and above)

(Nominated by the Representative Council for Learners) Non-teaching Staff

In the case of schools for LSEN the following additional categories of persons must be represented on the Governing Body. Each category must be represented by one or more members.

- Representatives of sponsoring bodies, if applicable
- Representatives of organizations of parents of learners with special education needs, if applicable
- Representatives of organizations of disabled persons, if applicable Disabled persons, if applicable
- A new RCL for the school is elected at the beginning of each year. The RCL is then entitled to elect representatives on the SGB for that year. These representatives may have knowledge of the financial affairs of the school but they may not contract or be held financially liable for any consequence of their membership of the SGB.

1.2 SIZE OF THE SGB

The exact number of members on the SGB may vary from one school to another. The parent component must be the majority.

If an SGB serves more than one school, the total number of learners at both schools together will be used to decide the number of members of the SGB. If the school does not have a non-teaching member of staff the number of parent governors must be reduced by one so the total' number of governors will be reduced by 2.

- The table below provides a guideline of the number of members to be elected for each component of the SGB.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO BE ELECTED FOR EACH COMPONENT OF THE SGB						
School	Principal	Educators	Parents	Non_educator staff	Learners	Total
Primary School < 160 Learners	1	1	4	1	0	7
Primary School 160 to 719 Learners	1	2	5	1	0	9
Primary School 720 or more Learners	1	3	6	1	0	11
Secondary School < 630 Learners	1	2	7	1	2	13
Secondary School 630 or more Learners	1	3	9	1	3	17
Comprehensive or Combined School < 500 Learners		2	7	1	2	13
Comprehensive or Combined School 500 or More Learners	1	3	9	1	3	17

- The table below provides a guideline of the number of members to be elected for each component of the SGB of schools for LSEN.

SCHOOLS FOR LSEN:							
NUMBER OF MEMBERS TO BE ELECTED FOR EACH COMPONENT OF THE SGB							
School	Principal	Educators	Parents	Non-educator staff	Learners or Care Worker	Sponsoring Body	Total
Primary School < 150 Learners	1	2	6	1	0	1	11
Primary School >150 Learners	1	3	7	1	0	1	13
Secondary School	1	2	7	1	1	1	13

< 150 Learners							
Secondary School > 150 Learners	1	3	9	1	2	1	17
Comprehensive or Combined School < 150 Learners	1	3	9	1	2	1	17
Comprehensive or Combined School >150 Learners	1	2	8	1	2	1	15
Place-of-Safety	1	1	1	1	1	0	–

1.3 TERM OF OFFICE OF THE SGB

1.3.1 Term of Office

SGB MEMBERS	TERM OF OFFICE
Elected members	
• Parents	Three years
• Educators	Three years
• Non-Teaching staff	Three years
Co-opted members	Three years or shorter
Learners nominated by the RCL	<u>One year</u>
Office-bearers of the SGB	– <u>One year</u>

1.3.2 Expiry of Term of Office

- The term of office of elected and co-opted members comes to an end
- upon the adoption of a motion of no confidence in the SGB by parents at a properly constituted meeting of parents when a parent does not have a child at the school any more (e.g. the child leaves at the end of the first quarter of a year, then the parent's term of office will end with immediate effect, namely at the end of the same quarter)
- SGB members remain in office after the expiry of their term of office until the election of a new SGB.
- A member of the SGB may be re-elected or co-opted as the case may be, after the expiration of his/her term of office.

1.4 PORTFOLIOS OF THE SGB

1.4.1 Office-Bearers

The elected SGB members must from amongst themselves elect office-bearers, who must include at least a:

- Chairperson • Treasurer • Secretary

Only a parent member of the SGB who is not employed at the school may serve as the chairperson of the SGB.

1.4.2 Other Members

The specialist functions of the SGB may be divided and assigned to the other members of the SGB to ensure that every person is responsible for a portfolio within the SGB. The person responsible for a specific portfolio will act as the chairperson for any sub-committee established for that portfolio.

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE SGB

The law stipulates the functions, which the SGB must perform on behalf of the school. The function of individual members of the SGB is to contribute to and execute the functions assigned to the SGB. The MEC may decide that the governance of two or more public schools may be the responsibility of one SGB if that is in the best interest of the schools concerned.

2.1 COMPULSORY OR OBLIGATORY FUNCTIONS OF THE SGB

- promoting the best interests of the school
- adopting a constitution and a code of conduct for learners (See *AnnexuresISGBI01A and B for examples*)
- developing the vision and mission statement of the school and be part of the strategic planning process
- supporting the principal, educators and other staff of the school
- determining the starting and ending times of the school day
- determining the school uniform
- recommending the appointment of staff by the State
- appointing staff at the school
- encouraging parents educators and learners to render voluntary services to the school
- developing the school's policy on admissions, language and religious observances
- administering and control the school's grounds and buildings
- suspending learners in certain circumstances
- preparing a budget each year
- enforcing of the payment of school fees and to recover school fees
- appointing both an accountant and auditor or other suitable person to audit the school's records and financial statements and to ensure that control measures are in place to safeguard the administration of school funds
- determining and stipulates how the school will promote multi-lingualism

2.2 OPTIONAL FUNCTIONS OF THE SGB

- The SGB may allow the use of school facilities for community, social and school fund-raising events
- The SGB may affiliate to voluntary associations representing governing bodies of public schools
- The SGB may establish posts for educators and non-educators additional to the educator and non-educator establishment determined by the MEC. Payment of salaries to such educators and non-teaching staff should be determined by the SGB.
- Staff employed by the SGB must have a written contract, which must be agreed to and signed by both parties. This contract should deal with salary matters and other conditions of service and should include a clear job description. An example of a contract for educators appears in *AnnexureISGBI02*. The State is not liable for any act or omission by the public

school with regard to the school's contractual responsibility as the employer of educators and non-teaching staff be registered as an educator with the South African Council of Educators (SACE) and be affiliated to a Teacher Union.

When employing such staff, the SGB must bear in mind: - The ability of the candidate

- **The principle of equity**
- **The need to redress past injustices**
- **The need for representivity**

Appendix C

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONNAIRE IS TO BE COMPLETED BY PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS THAT HAVE RCLS. THE CONTENTS OF THIS FORM ARE ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL: INFORMATION IDENTIFYING THE RESPONDENT AND THE SCHOOL WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME OR THE NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL.

SECTION A

1. How many members does your school SGB have? _____

2. Please indicate the numbers of the following representatives on the school's SGB:

a) Parents _____

b) Teachers _____

c) Students _____

3. In what capacity is the head of the school a part of the SGB?

a) As a member of the staff delegation

b) As an ex-officio member

c) As an office bearer

4. How often does the SGB meet?

5. How would you rate the following functioning of the SGB in addressing the problems of the school:

Very efficient	Efficient	Undecided	Inefficient	Very Inefficient

6. How long have you been a member of the school's Management Committee/ SGB/ Education committee? _____

7. How do you view learner participation in decision - making in the governance and administration of the school?

Strongly favour	Tend to favour	No opinion	Tend to disfavour	Strongly disfavour

8. Give reasons and/or examples for your response to Q7 above.

9. How often do learners attend meetings of the above mentioned Governance body?

Always	Often	Unsure	Seldom	Never

10. How would you rate learner representatives' knowledge of general school issue?

Very good	Good	Not good not poor	Poor	Very poor

11. The ability of learner representatives to present their concerns in a meeting is

Very good	Good	Not good not poor	Poor	Very poor

12. Give reasons and/or examples for your responses in Q11.

13. How often do you assess the contribution of learners in meetings at which they are decision - makers with teachers and parents?

Very substantial	Substantial	Undecided	Unsubstantial	Very unsubstantial

14. How would you rate the interests of learners in such meetings in matters unrelated directly to them?

Very uninterested	Interested	Undecided	Uninterested	Very uninterested

15. To what extent do you feel the presence of staff members/parents in the Governance Committee/SGB inhibits full learner participation?

Great extent	Some extent	Undecided	Very small extent	No extent

16. What is your attitude to learners being given equal status to parents and teachers in decision - making bodies in school?

Strongly favour	Tend to favour	No opinion	Tend to disfavour	Strongly disfavour

17. Give your reasons for your response to Q16 above.

18. Learners should be given office bearer positions on SGBs etc.

Strongly agree	Agree with reservations	No opinion	Disagree with reservations	Strongly disagree

19. Learners should be entrusted with financial responsibilities in the SGB etc.

Definitely yes	Probably yes	Uncertain	Probably not	Definitely not

20. Student representatives should be present when teacher misconduct is being discussed.

Definitely yes	Probably yes	Uncertain	Probably not	Definitely not

21. What are your reasons for your response to Q20 above?

22. The participation of learners makes it difficult for urgent decisions to be reached quickly.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

23. The participation of learners helps to resolve conflicts between students and staff.

Strongly agree	Agree	No opinion	Disagree	Strongly disagree

24. Please feel free to respond to any other issues concerning student participation that is not covered in this section.

SECTION B: GOVERNANCE

How is the school governing body elected?

2. Who in your school elects the learner component of school governance?

3. Are there any kind of criteria?

4. How many parents in your school form part of the SGB and why?

5. How many educators in your school form part of the SGB and why?

6. How many learners form part of the SGB team in your school and why?

7. Do you believe it is a fair number?

8. What kind of language is used during SGB meetings?

9. Is the input from learners taken seriously?

10. Are they allowed to deliberate, argue or give their own opinion, when decisions are taken?

SECTION C: PARTICIPATION & COMMUNIQUE

1. Are learners given equal access to information like other stakeholders?

2. Do you believe that learners who are part of SGBs are treated fairly well by other stakeholders?

3. Which component of the SGB do you believe treats learners fairly and why?

4. Which component of the SGB do you believe treats learners badly and why?

5. Can you say there is an atmosphere of sameness (equality) that prevails in your school SGB structure? OR do they treat each other as equal partners?

6. In your own understanding of the functioning of the structure, can you say that members respect each other?

7. What can you say on how communication is taking place in school governance?

8. Do you think the learners' right to participate is taken seriously or not?

9. How would you rate and view their participation as members in school governance?

10. Do you believe that learners do perform a meaningful role in your school governance?

SECTION D: DECISION - MAKING

1. How do members of your school take decisions?

2. Who actually takes decisions?

3. How often do learners attend decision-making meetings?

4. How do you feel about learners taking decisions with parents and teachers at your school?

5. Do all members including learners take decisions?

6. If there are opposing views what happens? And what is done to rectify the situation?

7. Are learners always present when decisions are taken?

8. What kind of learner representation do you envisage?

9. When crucial (serious) decisions are to be taken do you involve the learner component and why?

10. What kind of decisions do you view as crucial?

SECTION E: CAPACITY BUILDING

1. Is there any development and growth that you notice taking place in those learners who are part of SGB?

2. What kind of skills are they empowered with?

3. What kind of training are they given before participating as SGB members?

4. How much support do learner representatives enjoy from other stakeholders?

5. Do you think they are given an opportunity to be tomorrow's leaders?

6. Would you say that the kind of support is adequate?

Thank you very much for your co-operation

Appendix D

LEARNER JOURNAL ENTRY

This journal entry is part of research into the potential role of RCL learner in decision-making in secondary school governance.

The function of a journal is to set down on paper your thoughts about a specific issue or topic. In this case your journal is about your role as a member and your participation in school governance. You must answer in short story form as if you are writing an essay or talking to a friend. Thank you for your co-operation. You will be assured of the confidentiality of your responses.

1. How have you become part of school governance?
For example were you nominated by teachers/learners/the principal or did you come on your own?

2. Why do you think you were chosen to represent learners in the school governance?

3. How would you rate your participation in discussion in the SGB meetings?

4. Since you have been part of the SGB, how successful have you been as a learner in getting your points across in the meetings?

5. Please state possible reasons for your answers in Q4 above and write down a few where you have been successful/ not successful.

6. Do you think what you say in the SGB meetings is taken seriously by other stakeholders?

7. What difference do you think your participation in the SGB meetings is making to the decisions that are made by the SGB?

8. How strongly do you feel about the learners taking part in decision- making with parents and teachers at school?

9. Do you feel you have benefited from being a member of the SGB and would you encourage others to participate in future?

10. Have you been happy with the way in which information regarding school governance has been disseminated?

11. What kind of training or skills are you given as members of school governance?

12. Please feel free to respond to any other issue concerning learner participation that is not covered in this section.

Thank you very much for your co-operation.